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ANALYSTS OF THE LANGUAGE OF MORALS

by

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I shall summarize and critically examine the central features of the theories of values of four contemporary moral philosophers: A.J. Ayer, C.L. Stevenson, R.M. Hare, and P.H. Nowell-Smith. I shall first look back, however, to the theory of moral philosophy of the most influential 'forefather' of this group, David Hume. Hume's theory stands as a challenge to moral philosophers who would assume that moral judgments are primarily, in some sense, acts of 'reason'. Although our four contemporaries follow Hume in this, his challenge, in the form I shall indicate shortly, will provide the main theme for this thesis.

There are of course other important philosophers who have set forth theories similar to those I have chosen, and the names of Carnap, Schlick, Barnes, Findlay, and Urmson immediately come to mind. A larger effort than this would be remiss if it did not give them special attention.

The attempt to classify the philosophers in this tradition is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's example of the problem of defining the word "games", although in the case of our philosophers there is no single term which seems appropriate to separate them from some other types of philosophers. Like the activities we call "games" our philosophers have similarities and dissimilarities, and yet there are enough similarities to suggest that they have 'family resemblances'.¹ They do

¹Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I, sec. 67, p. 32e.

not suffer from the lack of an appropriate 'family name', so long as one keeps in mind their 'family resemblances'.

To begin with, perhaps the most obvious resemblance is that the four contemporaries, following Hume, react against any suggestion that ethical statements are essentially or primarily 'cognitive', or acts of 'reason', or acts of 'the mind'. They would oppose any assumption that man has an intellectual 'faculty' or capability that enables him to 'know' what is ethically right or wrong, good or bad. This does not of course mean that their theories preclude the possibility of a person's making moral judgments, but it does mean that any analysis of moral judgments will not single out a 'cognitive' factor as central or most important.

The consequence of this is that many traditional theories of moral philosophy must necessarily be rejected. All theories of moral philosophy that are part of metaphysical theories must of course be 'eliminated'¹ since they would be dependent on an alleged special knowledge of 'reality', including 'moral reality'. Thus any theory traditionally classified in moral philosophy texts as "objectivist" must be abandoned since our philosophers would reject any suggestion that 'goodness' or 'rightness' are 'qualities' or 'predicates' which have a reality independent of their being 'cognized' by any person. Among other metaphysical theories those labelled as "absolutist" have been especially designated for attack by our contemporary analysts in this study, no doubt because of the predominance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of neo-Hegelian 'absolutists' like T.H. Green, F.H. Bradley, and Bernard

¹A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Ch. I; Cf., Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, last para., Sec. XII, Part III, p. 165.

Bosanquet. The 'anti-cognitivist' approach would of course reject any theory which has been traditionally termed "intuitionist"---any theory, that is, which postulates that moral judgments are in some way immediate intellectual acts or acts of 'intellectual intuition'. This is of course a wide category, and would include philosophers as unlike as G.E. Moore on the one hand, and Sir David Ross, and H.A. Prichard, on the other.

These theories---metaphysical, objectivist, absolutist, and intuitionist, however they are termed---comprise almost all of the main classifications of theories in traditional moral philosophy. One main exception is that of 'subjectivist' theories. This is not to say that some or all of the moral philosophers in this study may simply be termed "subjectivist". Professor Ayer, for example, specifically rejects a common type of 'subjectivist' analysis in Language, Truth, and Logic,¹ while postulating what he has termed a 'radical subjectivist' theory. In a later paper, however, as I shall indicate, he argues that the 'subjectivist versus objectivist' antithesis is irrelevant in moral philosophy; and he is followed in this view by Nowell-Smith. Nevertheless, in a review of Hare's Language of Morals, Professor Braithwaite does not hesitate to term this type of approach "subjectivist";² and since he identifies himself with it he would not regard the word as a derogatory label as it appears to be when used by some 'objectivists'. Whatever they are appropriately termed, our contemporary moral philosophers are concerned to indicate, as we shall see, that their analyses do not warrant any suggestion that their theories are erected on 'shifting sands'. Their analyses are attempts to understand moral judgments and not to make them.

¹Op. cit., pp. 104-5.

²R.B. Braithwaite, Mind, Vol. LXIII, 1954, p. 250.

In their rejection of most traditional theories our five philosophers might be termed "non-cognitivists". The main objection to using this class-term, however, is that it is too broad. It is possible, that is, to think of a 'non-cognitivist' analysis of ethical statements which would be quite unlike the analysis of any of the philosophers in this study. When Professor Macmurray, for example, wrote that "a judgment of value can never be intellectual in its origin"¹, he was subscribing to what could be termed a non-cognitivist theory; but in other respects his views are quite unlike those of the philosophers I have chosen to study. In their respective analyses of ethical statements, as we shall see, our philosophers come close to being satisfactorily termed "emotivists", and indeed, Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson may be so termed. Hare and Nowell-Smith, however, explicitly dissociate themselves from 'emotivism' (although, as I shall indicate, their views are much closer to 'emotivism' than they would wish).

The four contemporaries, having had the advantage of a mass of writings in moral philosophy and logic since Hume's day, have more in common. In addition to opposing 'intuitionism' and 'absolutism', they are also opposed to 'naturalistic' theories, that is, theories which purport to translate the relevant ethical terms in ethical judgments into non-ethical or 'naturalistic' terms (to say, for example, that the word "good" is equivalent in meaning to the word "pleasure", or to say that the 'logical behaviour' of ethical sentences is the same as that of 'descriptive' or 'theoretical' sentences). There can be no translation, they insist, one way or the other: there is no equivalence of meaning

¹John Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, P. 37.

between an ethical term and a non-ethical term, or between an ethical statement and a 'descriptive' or 'theoretical' statement. And in saying this they are insisting on what has been called in recent times "the autonomy of morals".¹ At least in his prescriptions for the analysis of morals Hume is in agreement with our contemporaries in this; and perhaps the best example of this is the well-known passage in which he admonishes moral philosophers who argue from premisses containing the words "is" and "is not" to conclusions containing the words "ought" and "ought not".² Of course it should be noted that absolutists and intuitionists, among most other contemporary philosophers, agree with Hume's prescription; and this agreement is evident in their seeking to avoid what has been termed (since G.E. Moore's Principia Ethica) the 'naturalistic fallacy'.³ But apart from this, and an insistence upon the principles of logic, there are few other similarities between our 'emotivist'-like philosophers and any group which includes intuitionists and absolutists.

There is a further, and extremely important 'family resemblance' which clearly separates our four contemporaries from traditional moral philosophers, including Hume. This feature is their method of doing philosophy---that is the method of 'logical analysis' imparted to us primarily by the work of 'the Vienna Circle', and by Wittgenstein. The wedding of this new influence with the tradition of Hume is succinctly expressed by Ayer in the following reference to 'the Vienna Circle':

"So far as their positivism went they were continuing an old philosophical tradition---it is remarkable how many of their most radical doctrines are already to be found in Hume. Their originality lay in their attempt to make it logically rigorous and in their use for the purpose of a developed and sophisticated logical technique."⁴

¹Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 36; also W.H. Walsh, "The Autonomy of Ethics", The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 26, 1957, pp. 1-14.

²Hume, Treatise, Book III, Part I, Sec. 1.

³G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 10.

⁴Ayer, "The Vienna Circle", in The Revolution in Philosophy, p. 73.

The manifestation of this new influence is well expressed in Hare's statement and guiding theme for his work The Language of Morals: "Ethics, as I conceive it, is the logical study of the language of morals."¹ And that is the extent of their claims. Moral philosophy (indeed philosophy in general) is not a theory or a code one might expound, it is an activity---the activity of the logical analysis of language. According to them, the philosopher who endeavours to search out and propound the 'fundamental principle of morality', who seeks to 'know' the 'Good' or the 'Right' as if these words referred to characteristics or qualities of the world that could be intuitively known, or who sets forth a 'way of life', is engaging in the activity of the moralist and not that of the moral philosopher. As we shall see later, this new view of the role of the moral philosopher is not a creed without foundation, for, it is held, there are logical grounds for maintaining that the moral philosopher qua moral philosopher cannot be more than a logical analyst of the language of morals. This approach is clearly seen in the editorial foreword by A.J. Ayer to Nowell-Smith's Ethics:

"There is a distinction, which is not always sufficiently marked between the activity of a moralist, who sets out to elaborate a moral code, or to encourage its observance, and that of a moral philosopher, whose concern is not primarily to make moral judgments but to analyse their nature. Mr. Nowell-Smith writes as a moral philosopher. He shows how ethical statements are related to, and how they differ from, statements of other types, and what are the criteria which are appropriate to them."²

This view about the role of the moral philosopher has met and probably will continue to meet opposition. One would have thought that the fervor of this opposition would have lessened somewhat since the late 'thirties, following the publication of Language, Truth, and Logic, when

¹Hare, The Language of Morals, Preface, p.v.

²Op. cit. (The word "primarily" in this foreword is puzzling).

Sir David Ross wrote of Ayer's theory as an "attempt to discredit ethics",¹ and Martin D'Arcy thanked Ayer "for having shown us how modern philosophers can fiddle and play tricks while the world burns."² As recently as 1955, however, a writer about moral philosophy, John L. Mothershead, Jr., quotes with approval C.I. Lewis's statement concerning the 'emotive theory'. "This," they would agree, "is one of the strangest aberrations ever to visit the mind of man."³ Let me say at once that, while recognizing the difficulties in early expressions of the 'emotive theory', my sympathies are more with the Ayer's than with the D'Arcy's and the Mothershead's. No doubt this kind of moral philosophy, if sound, is destructive of most traditional theories of moral philosophy; but if it is unsound it will only be revealed by a serious analysis and not by a reliance upon persuasion and propaganda.

In saying that the four contemporary philosophers are philosophical or logical analysts and are thus in general agreement about the method of doing philosophy, I do not suggest that they are in agreement about particular doctrines. In particular, there is the same kind of range in theories of 'meaning' between Ayer and Nowell-Smith as may be found in the doctrines of Wittgenstein between the Tractatus and the Philosophical Investigations. There must necessarily be some differences between theories of values written under the assumption that (to state this point generally) 'the meaning of a statement is in its verification', and those written under the assumption that 'the meaning of a word is in its use'. This is not to say that a particular analysis of moral language is necessarily implied by a philosopher's epistemology. Professor Ayer, for example, has insisted that his "emotive analysis of ethical judgments"

¹W.D. Ross, Foundations of Ethics, p. 38.

²D'Arcy, "Philosophy Now", in Criterion, 1936.

³J.L. Mothershead, Jr., Ethics, p. 130.

can stand apart from his theory of knowledge and is "valid on its own account".¹ As I shall indicate, however, the theories of 'meaning' held by the philosophers in this study are important and do have an influence on their respective analyses. A secondary aim of this thesis will thus be to note the differences which appear to result from the ways in which the philosophers assume or incorporate in their theories different views about 'meaning'.

Apart from the general similarities between our contemporaries and Hume, there is a special link between their theories which is of fundamental importance to this thesis. As I have mentioned, Hume's analysis leads to an insistence upon the 'autonomy of morals'; but since value judgments are most often made after a consideration of what we generally term 'the facts' of a situation, and since when we are asked to explain or give 'reasons' for a value judgment we often respond with 'factual'-type statements, we must then consider what the relationship must be between 'factual reasons' and value judgments. Now each of our contemporary philosophers will be seen to have somewhat different views about this relationship. Ayer will be seen to accept without qualification that there is what Nowell-Smith has termed "Hume's gap"² between factual statements and value judgments; and he follows Hume in allowing that the relationship is what might be referred to as psychological rather than logical. Stevenson, for the most part, accepts the "rough but useful rule...that ethical judgments are supported or attacked by reasons related to them psychologically, rather than logically";³ but there are some exceptions, he admits, and it will be necessary to consider them. Hare and Nowell-Smith, however, would wish to dissociate themselves from the

¹Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, Preface to 2nd. Ed., p. 20.

²Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 40.

³Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 115.

'psychological' emphasis of the 'emotivist' theories, and while Hare accepts that there is a gap and tries to bridge it by logic, Nowell-Smith tries to eliminate the gap altogether. Although the problem of 'Hume's gap' emerges most clearly when we consider the theories of Hare and Nowell-Smith, it may be taken as the underlying problem for this thesis. Can we assume, that is, that there has been a progression within this non-cognitivist tradition which begins by accepting 'Hume's gap' and ends by either bridging it or eliminating it; or must we conclude that Hume's challenge remains?

¹ Cf. *op. cit.* Editorial Foreword to David Hume, by A.N. Smeaton. Cf. also, Introduction, p. 7.

CHAPTER I

DAVID HUME (1711-1776)

Section 1

Although there has been disagreement about the philosophic merits of the writings of David Hume, there can be no disagreement about the fact that these writings have had a profound effect on subsequent philosophers. Any philosopher who would assume that moral argument can proceed from factual statements to value judgments cannot ignore the challenge posed by Hume. He cannot be ignored especially by one who would study the writings of contemporary moral philosophers who believe that their proper role is that of being logical or philosophical analysts of the language of morals. It is not of course that he could be termed a logical or philosophical analyst, for these terms are applicable only to certain philosophers of the past several decades; but these philosophers, as we have already begun to see, give much credit to Hume for laying the groundwork for their development. In an editorial foreword to a recent book on Hume, for example, Professor Ayer wrote that "It is astonishing to find how much of what is thought to be distinctive in modern analytical philosophy was already foreshadowed in Hume's work."¹ And in the Preface to Ethics and Language, Professor Stevenson wrote: "Apart from

¹A.J. Ayer, Editorial Foreword to David Hume, by A.H. Basson. Cf., above, Introduction, p. 5.

my emphasis on language, my approach is not dissimilar to that of Hume."¹ These statements are typical of the credit given to Hume by contemporary philosophical analysts; and in this chapter my task will be to bring forth and examine the elements in his writings which have given rise to such credit.

The reader of Hume's writings is immediately confronted with a problem concerning textual interpretation which must be considered before trying to assess his philosophy. In the "Advertisement" to his Enquiries (An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, and An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals), Hume requests that the reader should ignore his earlier work, the unsuccessful and at that time much vilified, A Treatise of Human Nature. Indeed he asserts with some feeling that he "never acknowledged" the Treatise² (he had it published anonymously). "Henceforth," he wrote, "the Author desires, that the following Pieces (i.e. the Enquiries) may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles." Most of his interpreters, however, are agreed in ignoring his desire, and with good reason. Despite his success in presenting, in the later work, a more easily understood text, his young man's work, the Treatise, is generally acknowledged to be one of the great works in the history of philosophy. In any event, in what concerns us in this present study we need not worry unduly; for as Hume has acknowledged in the opening sentence of the same "Advertisement" to the Enquiries (surprisingly in view of its context), "Most of the principles, and reasonings, contained in this volume, were published in a work in

¹C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language, Preface, p. vii.

²Henceforth, for the sake of brevity, I shall for the most part adopt the common practice of referring to his A Treatise of Human Nature as the Treatise, and I shall refer to the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals as the Enquiry. When referring to the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding I shall use the full title.

three volumes, called A Treatise of Human Nature..." Where there are significant differences between the two works in his treatment of these "principles" I shall try to note them.

In considering Hume's moral philosophy I shall be mainly concerned with his arguments to 'prove' that moral judgments are not based on 'reason', and his 'emotivist' analysis of ethical terms and statements. As I have indicated in my Introduction, it is this aspect of his work which most engages contemporary philosophers, even those, perhaps especially those, who are not in sympathy with him. Professor C.D. Broad, for example, in his chapter dealing with Hume in his Five Types of Ethical Theory, writes that "it will be best, in the case of Hume, to take first...the question of the meaning and analysis of ethical predicates and propositions."¹

Before considering Hume's analysis, however, it is useful to consider briefly his aims as a 'moral philosopher', and the methods he proposes to use. To avoid possible confusion, we might first consider what he means when he speaks of 'moral philosophy'.

In the Introduction to his Treatise, he uses the phrase "moral philosophy" to contrast it with "natural philosophy", and in this context the phrase has a much wider connotation than it generally has today. Where "natural philosophy" might be translated as "natural or physical science", Hume translates the phrase "moral philosophy" as "the science of human nature".² This indeed is the subject of his A Treatise of Human Nature, and the full title of this work is worth emphasizing: "A TREATISE of HUMAN NATURE: Being an ATTEMPT to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into MORAL SUBJECTS." The word "moral" as here used is synonymous with one of the uses of the word listed in the Oxford

¹C.D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 85.

²Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding, p. 5.

Dictionary, namely: "Used to designate the kind of probable evidence that rests on a knowledge of the general tendencies of human nature, or of the character of particular individuals or classes of men." In the Introduction to the Treatise Hume summarizes the subject areas which he proposes to examine by means of his 'moral philosophy'. There are, he says, four "sciences, whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate" than the sciences of "Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion". These four are "Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics"; and within these sciences "is comprehended almost every thing, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind."¹

"The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: and politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other."²

The science of 'morals' in this group of four 'sciences' indicates another, and more restricted use of the word "moral", which comes closer to our contemporary uses; but even this use is wider in connotation than it is in the phrase "moral philosophy" as used by most contemporary 'moral philosophers'. Hume's use of the word here would include what we would now describe as the 'psychology and sociology of morals' in addition to 'moral philosophy' or the 'philosophy of ethics'.

The word "moral" is used in even another sense by Hume, and this sense should be noted since we shall have occasion to refer to it later. In one context he contrasts 'moral reasoning' with 'demonstrative reasoning'. "All reasonings," he writes, "may be divided into two kinds, namely, demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matter of fact and existence."³ As used in this

¹ Introduction to Treatise, p. xix, ff.

² Ibid.

³ Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding, p.35, Cf., p. 164.

context the word is synonymous with another listing in the Oxford Dictionary, namely, "as applied to all evidence which is merely probable and not demonstrative."

To avoid misunderstanding I shall use the phrase "moral philosophy" (unless I say otherwise) in one of the main senses in which it is generally understood today. Without at this point attempting to engage in an analysis of the word "philosophy", which would of course require a prolegomena of great magnitude and difficulty, I assume that my use of the phrase will be understood, even if it sometimes provokes disagreement, when I say that it will be synonymous with "the philosophical or logical analysis of the language of morals". And when I speak of Hume's 'moral philosophy' (unless I say otherwise) I shall be concerned primarily with what we would now term his analysis of ethical terms and statements.

This is not to suggest that his explicit purpose as a moral philosopher was with such an analysis. Indeed, his analysis is subordinate to what he felt to be the purpose of moral philosophy. Like most philosophers before the present century, he felt no logical restrictions against stating that purpose.

"The end of all moral speculations," he wrote, "is to teach us our duty; and, by proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue, beget correspondent habits, and engage us to avoid one, and embrace the other."¹

In entertaining such an aim, even in stating the purpose of moral philosophy, Hume is entering the realms of what we would now term the psychology and sociology of morals---as well as failing to differentiate, as his followers would differentiate today, between the role of the moralist and that of the moral philosopher.

¹Enquiry, p. 172

We have already seen that contemporary philosophers would insist on the latter distinction;¹ but, in addition, many contemporaries, especially most philosophical analysts, would oppose his engaging in empirical science---not simply because his science is suspect, but simply because it is empirical science. As J.O. Urmson has written, the philosophical analyst would maintain that philosophy is not "a science alongside the natural sciences", and "the philosopher does not make empirical statements."² He goes on to say that, according to the philosophical analyst, "philosophy is...to be identified with analysis. Analysis is the one and only legitimate activity of philosophers."

Far from avoiding empirical statements, or suggesting that philosophy is not a "science alongside the natural sciences", Hume proposed that his philosophy should be the central science of all sciences. This central science was his "science of human nature", or "the science of man". All the sciences, he said, "even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties." In what he goes on to say he sets the task for his major philosophic writings:

"'Tis impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding, and cou'd explain the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings."³

And the method Hume prescribes for his philosophy, as for all of science, is the empirical method.

Hume had been greatly impressed by the successes of the empirical

¹Above, Introduction, p. 6.

²J.O. Urmson, Philosophical Analysis, p. 116; cf., Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 17.

³Treatise, p. xix.

method of modern science, as it had been applied by natural philosophers, especially Newton.

"In Newton", wrote Hume, "this island may boast of having produced the greatest and rarest genius that ever rose for the ornament and instruction of the species. Cautious in admitting no principles but such as were founded on experiment; but resolute to adopt every such principle, however new or unusual...."¹

But there had been a delay, he felt, in applying the empirical method to "moral subjects". He writes somewhat contemptuously of most of the writings of earlier and contemporary philosophers, referring to "the weak foundations of those systems, which have obtained the greatest credit..."²

"Principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduced from them, want of coherence in the parts, and of evidence in the whole, these are every where to be met with in the systems of the most eminent philosophers, and seem to have drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself."³

Some recent philosophers (he mentions Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson, and Butler) had "begun to put the science of man on a new footing", but Hume obviously felt that this was barely a beginning.

"In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature," he wrote, "we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security."⁴

He was aware that the hope to apply the empirical method in "moral philosophy" (i.e. his "science of human nature") would not be without difficulties; and he specifically mentions the problem that confronts all social scientists: that the object of investigation should be unaware that it is being investigated. He pointed out that if he were to try to investigate himself, in the same manner as he would have

¹Hume, History of England, as quoted by Kemp Smith in his The Philosophy of David Hume, p. 52.
²Treatise, p. xvii. ³Loc. cit. ⁴Ibid., p. xx.

investigated natural objects, this "reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of (his) natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon."¹ This problem no more deterred him, however, than it deters present-day psychologists and sociologists; and in the last part of his Introduction to the Treatise, he prescribes the method that we might expect him to follow:

"We must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension."²

Writing about this passage, Mr. Basson quite rightly points out that the word "experiments" is not used by Hume in the same sense in which it is generally used today. Of Hume's 'experiment', Basson writes the following:

"(It) is a procedure all his own, and it is invariably introspective in character. There are observations of human behaviour, but they are not accounts of a particular man's behaviour in carefully specified circumstances. They are accounts of general features of human behaviour, which are in fact obvious to everybody."³

If Hume had consistently adhered to the empirical method he prescribed for his study of 'moral subjects', his philosophic writings would probably be of little more than historical interest to psychologists and sociologists, and certainly of lesser interest to philosophers. Fortunately for philosophy, however, he did not follow his own empiricist prescriptions; and this is perhaps not surprising since the task he set for himself--that of explaining the principles of human nature--is a

¹Treatise, p. xxiii.

²Loc. cit.; cf., Enquiry, p. 174.

³A.H. Basson, David Hume, pp. 19-20.

logically and scientifically impossible task. Ironically, he clearly recognized this;

"...If this impossibility of explaining ultimate principles should be esteemed a defect in the science of man, I will venture to affirm, that 'tis a defect common to it with all the sciences,¹ and all the arts, in which we can employ ourselves..."¹

The effect of this approach was that he believed that man could make no claims to perfect knowledge; and in so many ways throughout his writings he insisted that "all knowledge resolves itself into probability."² In saying this Hume makes a break with one of the fundamental hopes of the philosophy and science that had preceded him. This was the hope of attaining perfection of knowledge, with mathematics as the model for all other branches of knowledge. Leibniz perhaps best expressed that hope when he suggested that man should aim to "find characters or signs appropriate to the expression of all our thoughts as definitely and as exactly as numbers are expressed by arithmetic or lines by geometrical analysis..."³ If this were possible, he felt, it would be possible to resolve differences of opinion by the invitation, "Let us calculate, Sir". But Hume would distrust even the conclusions of mathematics. When applying the "certain and infallible" rules of the demonstrative sciences, he says, "our fallible and uncertain faculties are apt to depart from them and fall into error."⁴ (One must wonder at his use of the words "certain" and "infallible" in this context). Hume is explicit on this point.

"There is no Algebraist nor Mathematician," he writes, "so expert in his science, as to place entire confidence in any truth immediately upon discovery of it, or regard it as anything, but a mere probability."⁵

¹Treatise, p. xxii.

²Op. cit., p. 181.

³Leibniz, On Method, Preface to the General Science, reprinted in The Age of Reason, Intro. and Comm. by Stuart Hampshire, p. 147.

⁴Treatise, p. 180. Cf., Ayer, "Basic Propositions", from Philosophical Essays, p. 105.

⁵Loc. cit., p. 180.

One might then have expected that in undertaking an assessment of the limits of the human understanding, Hume would have attempted to examine empirically all possible claims to knowledge with the limited hope of arriving at conclusions he would hold to be no more than probable. Nevertheless, in outlining his "mental geography", delineating "the distinct parts and powers of the mind",¹ he asserted several important universal categorical propositions which could not be justified on empirical grounds---including the extremely important prescription we have just seen, "all knowledge resolves itself into probability". We have earlier seen another such universal proposition, that "all reasonings may be divided into two kinds, namely, demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matter of fact and existence." Such statements could never be made on the basis of the empirical method, and yet, as we shall see, they are central to his philosophy, including, especially for us, his moral philosophy.

Hume should have been aware of this difficulty, just as some of his present-day followers are aware of it when faced with the charge that the verification principle (their criterion for literal meaningfulness of a statement) is not itself verifiable. He had said, after all, that "we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality...."² This is, in effect, the same position now taken by some of those who rely on the verification principle, although they assert that the principle itself is not an empirical statement, and is arrived at on the basis of logical analysis.

¹Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p. 13.

²Treatise, Introduction, p. xxii.

Despite Hume's inconsistency, he had prescribed his criteria for meaningfulness and had challenged all claims to knowledge that could not be 'verified' in terms of his 'principles'. This is the same kind of approach adopted today by those who defend the verification principle. Professor Ayer has succinctly articulated this 'method of challenge', and his words might well refer to Hume's similar method:

"It (the verification principle) purports to lay down the conditions which actually govern our acceptance, or indeed our understanding, of common sense and scientific statements which we take as describing the world 'in which we live and move and have our being'. This leaves it open to the metaphysician to reply that there may be other worlds besides the world of science and common sense, and that he makes it his business to explore them. But then the onus is on him to show by what criterion his statements are to be tested: until he does this we do not know how to take them."¹

In the same vein, after asserting, in effect, that every 'idea' (including, for example, the 'idea of God', whatever one's 'idea of God' is) is ultimately able to be traced back to sense experience, Hume had issued this challenge:

"Those who would assert that this position is not universally true nor without exception, have only one, and that an easy method of refuting it; by producing that idea, which, in their opinion, is not derived from this source."²

Hume does not, then, (nor can he) establish by empirical means his claims for the empirical method as the only legitimate method for acquiring 'knowledge'. Nevertheless, from the assumptions of his method he rejects all other systems of philosophy which are obviously not essentially empirical.

Although he has said that Book III ("Of Morals") of the Treatise is "in some measure independent of the other two, and requires not that

¹Ayer, in Revolution in Philosophy, ed. G. Ryle, pp. 75-6.

²Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p. 19.

the reader shou'd enter into all the abstract reasonings contain'd in them",¹ his epistemological principles in Book I are of relevance to his moral philosophy in two ways. First, as we have seen they would preclude the possibility of any theory of moral philosophy based on an alleged special, metaphysical knowledge---any theory, that is, that is not essentially empirical. Perhaps the archetype for metaphysical theories of this kind, although Hume does not specifically say so, is the Platonic theory which sets as an ideal a special and perfect 'knowledge' or 'vision' of 'the Good'. The revelation of 'the Good', to be achieved by few, if any, 'philosopher-kings', and by no others, is the ultimate moment of perfection in knowledge. An important assumption of this theory is that with perfect knowledge a person could do no wrong. A corollary is that within such a theory it would not be possible to say that a person, while knowing what was right, willingly chose to act wrongly. If a person acted wrongly, or chose an evil end, it would be because he did not have perfect knowledge about the situation. From Hume's point of view any such theory is obviously suspect. Thus, in the development of his philosophy, at least in the order of its exposition, Hume's epistemological prescriptions clear the way for his moral philosophy by undermining the possibility of theories based on claims to metaphysical and religious knowledge. Later, in Books II and III, he specifically attacks such theories when he argues that 'reason' has no influence on actions and passions; but even before this attack, it must be noted, he has already gone a long way toward 'discrediting' most traditional theories of moral philosophy.

His epistemological prescriptions are of relevance in a second

¹From the 'Advertisement' to Book III.

and more positive way. Although they lead to scepticism concerning any hopes of achieving perfect knowledge, they are a preparation for his postulating a theory of what Kemp Smith has termed "natural beliefs", and this theory is compatible with and tends to corroborate his moral philosophy. All knowledge, he felt, in being no more than probable, is "of the same nature with that evidence, which we employ in common life..."¹ What, then, was the nature of our 'common' reasoning? Hume's approach to this question belongs more appropriately to psychology than to philosophy. He generalizes about what in fact we seem to do. Despite our being unable to demonstrate, for example, that a 'cause' will be followed by an 'effect', our repeated experiences of perceiving a specific cause-effect relationship will 'produce' in us a 'belief' that the next appearance of the 'cause' will be followed by a specific 'effect'. From such observations he makes the following claim:

"...all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures."²

And earlier in the Treatise, in a section entitled, "Of the causes of belief", he had written the following:

"Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide upon my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating from the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another."³

Here we see what may appropriately be termed an "emotivist theory of

¹Treatise, p. 181.

²Ibid., p. 183.

³Ibid., p. 103.

knowledge". As Kemp Smith points out, Hume had reversed the traditional role of 'reason' and 'feeling', and it is this which is "truly distinctive" in his philosophy.¹ From his epistemological principles, and after having postulated his positive theory of knowledge (his 'emotivist' theory), his range of possibilities for a compatible theory of moral philosophy is of course extremely limited. It can come, then, as no surprise to one who follows Hume's exposition to read, subsequently, that "morality...is more properly felt than judg'd of..."²

I have said that this can come as no surprise to the reader who follows Hume's exposition. Kemp Smith has effectively argued, however, that, influenced by Francis Hutcheson, Hume had been convinced of the correctness of his moral philosophy even before he undertook to write his epistemology. As Kemp Smith expressed it, "it was through the gateway of morals that Hume entered into his philosophy, and that, as a consequence of this, Books II and III of the Treatise are in date of first composition prior to the working out of the doctrines dealt with in Book I."³ This thesis is supported largely, however, by evidence external to the Treatise and the Enquiries, and, while interesting, it is of little relevance to this study. What is relevant is that, however he had arrived at it, Hume's theory of knowledge precludes the possibility of a 'cognitivist' theory of moral philosophy.

Section 2

Hume's epistemology, in itself, should have been a sufficient basis for his dismissing any 'cognitivist' analysis of ethical statements since, as we have seen, the acceptance of any claim to knowledge

¹Kemp Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume, p. 8ff.

²Treatise, p. 470

³Kemp Smith, Op. cit., p. vi.

is primarily dependent on the "sensitive" rather than on the "cogitative" parts of our nature. It should have been possible for him to plunge directly into the "positive aspect"¹ of his moral philosophy with his 'emotivist' analysis of ethical statements. However, in the first section of Book III ('Of Morals') of the Treatise, he presses the 'negative aspect', a specific attack against theories of moral philosophy which assert that "moral distinctions" are "derived from reason". The title of this section is, "Moral Distinctions not deriv'd from Reason."

Now although he has said in the Advertisement to Book III that the Book is "in some measure independent of the other two", it is readily apparent that at least Section I is not independent. His arguments to 'prove' that it is impossible "from reason alone, to distinguish between moral good and evil" are considerably dependent on his epistemology. Specifically, the reader must accept the very prescriptions with which Hume begins the Treatise (and like the prescriptions we have seen earlier,² by the way, these ones similarly cannot be derived and supported by the empirical method). In Book III he reiterates them. "It has been observed," he writes, "that nothing is ever present to the mind but its perceptions," and "perceptions resolve themselves into two kinds, viz., impressions and ideas."³ He is in effect stipulating that the word "perceptions" is to be used for all possible experience: "all the actions of seeing, hearing, judging, loving, hating, and thinking, fall under this denomination". There would perhaps be nothing exceptionable about this were it not for another of his stipulations, namely, that if an alleged 'idea' is not to be dismissed as meaningless it must be traced back to some

¹Kemp Smith, Op. cit. p. 193.

²Cf., p.19.

³Treatise, p. 456.

antecedent 'impression'.

"When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived?"¹

Hume's account of 'impressions' and 'ideas' is far from satisfactory, especially because of the debatable psychological language in which it is expressed, but the effect of what he writes is the empiricist's claim that all knowledge must be a posteriori, must come in and through sense experience; and as I have previously mentioned this would discredit much of traditional moral philosophy. Any claim to moral knowledge based, for example, on alleged 'a priori ideas', or whatever is intended by the phrase "pure reason",² must be considered meaningless.

In the following passage, Hume clearly indicates the tradition he would oppose:

"Those who affirm that virtue is nothing but a conformity to reason, that there are eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things, which are the same to every rational being that considers them; that the immutable measures of right and wrong impose an obligation, not only on human creatures, but also on the Deity himself. All these systems concur in the opinion that morality, like truth, is discern'd merely by ideas, and by their juxtaposition and comparison."³

Among such theories would be those which have since been listed in moral philosophy texts under the headings, "virtue is knowledge", "objectivist", "absolutist", and "intuitionist".

Another related aspect of his epistemology which is carried over into Books II and III and which leads to the same conclusion as that in the preceding paragraph is seen in his use of the words "reason" and "reasoning". In his arguments against cognitivist theories of moral philosophy he uses the words to denote the two kinds of reasoning which,

¹Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p. 22; cf., Treatise, pp. 6-7.

²Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 171.

³Treatise, p. 456.

according to him, encompass the activities of 'reason'. (In Book I he tended to restrict the use of the word "reason" to only the first of these 'functions'). This stipulation of the use of the word "reason" as seen in Book II is as follows:

"The understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information."¹

And in Book III of the Treatise the relation of this epistemological assumption to his moral philosophy is clearly drawn:

"...were virtue discover'd by the understanding; it must be an object of one of these operations, nor is there any third operation of the understanding, which can discover it."²

It was from this base in the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding that he issued one of his most often quoted challenges:

"When we run over our libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."³

As I have mentioned earlier, this, like other prescriptions we have seen, cannot be derived from and supported by the empirical method; and yet Hume purports to have so derived them. Nevertheless, although his language in postulating this prescription tends to be psychological (more so in the Treatise than in the Enquiry, as may be seen from comparing the two preceding quotations) there is a logical basis to what he says which makes it difficult to say that he is in error. If we analyse types of arguments in our language, arguments which we accept as in

¹Treatise, p. 413.

²Ibid., p. 463.

³Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p. 165.

some sense 'logical' and 'meaningful', we readily distinguish two basic methods, that is the deductive and inductive methods; and this is to arrive at the same conclusion which Hume purported to have arrived at through introspective psychology. Now to say that Hume is in error would necessitate accepting his challenge and indicating at least one other method of argument, or method of supporting propositions we would wish to assert. As we shall see shortly, there have been rationalist philosophers who would say that Hume's two categories of 'cognition' are restrictive and that there are more than two. In fact, all of the types of theories mentioned above ('virtue is knowledge', 'objectivist', 'absolutist', and 'intuitionist') are dependent on claims to 'knowledge' or 'reasoning' that go beyond Hume's two categories.

Among philosophers who have taken up this challenge, there is none more notable than Kant (the first important philosopher to appreciate Hume's greatness even while disagreeing with him). It was Hume's criticism of the concept of causality that, according to Kant, aroused him from his "dogmatic slumber";¹ and he recognized that Hume's criticism had wider implications.² He accepted that the criticism would rule out the possibility of "analytic a priori propositions" in the sense in which this would have been accepted by the 'dogmatic rationalists'. As Kemp Smith puts it:

"He was, and to the very last remained, in entire agreement with Hume's contention that the principle of causality is neither self-evident nor capable of logical demonstration, and he at once realised that what is true of this principle must also hold of all the other principles fundamental to science and philosophy."³

But Hume went further than Kant was prepared to go. Hume, in limiting

¹Kant, Prolegomena, p. 8.

²Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 55; also Critique of Practical Reason,³ Abbott's transl., Sec. 167ff (pp. 140-147).

³Kemp Smith, A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, p. xxvii.

'reason' to his two categories, would reject the notion of the 'synthetic a priori' altogether; whereas Kant felt that unless one could maintain that there is a kind of a priori knowledge, "there can be no moral philosophy at all."¹ Speaking of Kant's general concern for 'the a priori', Kemp Smith writes the following:

"The fundamental presupposition upon which Kant's argument rests--a presupposition never itself investigated but always assumed--is that universality and necessity cannot be reached by any process that is empirical in character."²

Thus for Kant the fundamental problem for moral philosophy (as for epistemology) as a result of Hume's criticism was the problem of establishing the possibility of "synthetic a priori propositions".³ Kant would allow that an ethical principle (such as, for example, "one ought not to murder"), like the so-called 'principle of causality', is neither self-evident nor capable of logical demonstration. In form it is like empirical statements, or, as Hume would say, statements about "matters of fact and existence". Such a statement, for Hume, must obviously be considered within the category of reasoning which he has called "probable reasoning". Kant's task, then, was to show that moral principles, could in fact be 'universal' and 'necessary', or a priori. This, as Kant acknowledged in his Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, is an exceedingly difficult task. "Nor have we here asserted the truth of this proposition," he writes, "much less pretended to have a proof of it in our power."⁴ His attempt was, in effect, to assert the possibility of a type of reason which goes beyond the two categories prescribed by Hume. In brief, his arguments are inconclusive. Like Hume's they remain no more than persuasive.

¹Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, tr. Paton, p. 58.

²Op. cit., p. xxi.

³Kant, Groundwork, pp. 112-3.

⁴Ibid, p. 112.

Despite Hume, and despite Kant's difficulties with Hume, there have been other moral philosophers who have shown little reluctance in setting forth theories which have depended on a third category of cognition. F.H. Bradley, for example, is another notable philosopher who would have bridled at the restriction. Outlining his special theory he had this to say:

"That which tells us what in particular is right and wrong is not reflection but intuition. We know what is right in a particular case by what we may call an immediate judgment, or an intuitive subsumption."¹

Bradley allows that "these phrases are perhaps not very luminous, and the matter of the 'intuitive understanding' in general doubtless difficult, and the special character of moral judgments not easy to define". But whatever 'intuition' may be for him, it is (as he tells us in a footnote) "the opposite of 'reasoning' or 'explicit inferring'"; and although he would not object if the reader substitutes the words "perception" or "sense", he insists that these be understood as not to exclude "the intellectual, the understanding, and its implicit judgments and inferences".²

In more recent times there have been other similar attempts to go beyond Hume's two categories. C.D. Broad, for example, specifically takes Hume to task in his Five Types of Ethical Theory. There, in the chapter devoted to Hume, Professor Broad postulates a third category which he calls "Formation of A Priori Concepts".³ (By concerning himself in this chapter with only the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,

¹Bradley, Ethical Studies, pp. 193-4.

²Note: When speaking of the reasoning that goes on in mathematics, Hume uses the phrase "intuitively or demonstratively certain", but under no circumstances could he have accepted Bradley's use of the word "intuition" as referring to an "immediate, intellectual judgment" which tells us "what in particular is right and wrong". Cf. Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding, p. 34.

³Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory, pp. 105-6.

he is able to say that Hume ignored the category "involved in what he calls 'knowledge of the relations of ideas'". But, as we have seen, and as Professor Broad acknowledges, Hume does not ignore this category of 'cognition' in the Treatise). Professor Broad does not argue for his third "function of cognition" as a base for his subsequent criticism of Hume. There have been other intuitionist theories which, however different in some respects, ultimately postulate that 'rightness' or 'goodness' are to be ascertained by acts of 'intellectual intuition';¹ but I have seen none that are conclusive, and none more persuasive than Hume's prescriptions to exclude them. Later, when considering what the contemporary moral philosophers in this study have to say about 'intuitionism' and other cognitivist theories I shall have to treat this question further. For the present I wish merely to note what Hume would exclude. I may say, however, that in view of the inconclusive nature of Kant's attempt to establish 'synthetic a priori propositions', it would appear to be more profitable to criticize Hume on other grounds.

A point to notice here, by the way, is that in the examples I have given of cognitivist philosophers who would object to Hume's delimiting the categories of 'cognition', the emphasis has been on 'moral judgments', or the 'cognition' or 'discernment' of ethical 'characters' or 'qualities', rather than on 'motives' to either actions or passions. The further question of whether the act of 'cognizing' moral 'rightness' or 'goodness' is in itself a motive to moral action is here left in abeyance. The question obviously is of considerable importance to some moral philosophers and seems inevitably to lead to the concern made manifest in papers written on the theme, "why should I

¹Cf., Ross, Foundations of Ethics, p. 170, and Carritt, The Theory of Morals, p. 123.

do my duty?" One of the merits of Hume's approach is that, as will be evident, this awkward question need not be raised.

Hume's first argument to dismiss cognitivist theories (Book III, I, I) may be paraphrased as follows: it is confirmed by common experience that men are often governed by their duties, deterred from some actions by the opinion of injustice and impelled to others by that of obligation; but, as he claims to have proved earlier--Book II, ^{III}II, III--reason alone cannot motivate or deter moral actions or passions. "Therefore", he concludes, "the rules of morality...are not conclusions of our reason."¹ This argument is unsatisfactory, however, as may be seen by a consideration of the types of relationships between the terms of, first, the premisses, and then of the conclusion. In the premisses, when Hume speaks of our being deterred from some actions and impelled to others, and when he says that reason cannot motivate or deter moral actions and passions, the relationship between the terms is 'causal' or 'psychological'; but the relationship between the terms in the conclusion, however, is of a different type. Even if his argument were valid (which is questionable if stated in syllogistic form) the most Hume would have demonstrated is that reason does not motivate or cause the act of drawing or discerning 'rules of morality' or 'moral distinctions'. The possibility would thus remain that reason is able to draw or discern or 'distinguish' the rules of morality or moral distinctions. There is some point, then, to the criticism of this argument made by D. Daiches Raphael, when he writes the following:

"Even if Hume has proved his premiss, he has proved that reason is not the moral faculty only in the sense in which 'moral faculty' means the faculty moving us to moral action, not

¹Treatise, p. 457.

in the sense in which it means the faculty that discerns the morality of actions. Yet the question he is now supposed to be settling is whether right and wrong are 'discerned' or 'distinguished' by reason".¹

There is more to Hume's argument, however, than this unsatisfactory syllogism. Underlying this and other arguments to dismiss cognitivist theories of moral philosophy is the very emotivist assumption he wishes later to 'prove', (an evident circularity here), namely, that 'moral distinctions' are 'impressions', specifically 'passions'.² This had been made explicit earlier in Book II of the Treatise in the following passage:

"The most probable hypothesis, which has been advanc'd to explain the distinction betwixt vice and virtue, and the origin of moral rights and obligations, is that from a primary constitution of nature certain characters and passions, by the very view and contemplation, produce a pain, and others in like manner excite a pleasure. The uneasiness and satisfaction are not only inseparable from vice and virtue, but constitute their very nature and essence. To approve of a character is to feel an original delight upon its appearance. To disapprove of it is to be sensible of an uneasiness."³

With this assumption that 'moral distinctions' are 'passions' and the premiss that reason has no influence over or does not "excite passions" (as "morals" do),⁴ Hume may have felt that he could conclude that reason has no influence over or does not motivate the 'passions' which he has designated as "moral distinctions". Restating the argument in this way, a way which does no injustice to Hume, it would be possible to avoid Raphael's criticism. In other words, Hume may be interpreted as saying that a 'moral distinction' or 'moral judgment' is a passion; a simple, original, and complete 'impression' in itself, and whatever 'causes' it, to exist, and motivates it or influences it to be what it is, it is not

¹Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 49.

²Treatise, p. 470. (My underlining).

⁴Treatise, p. 457.

³Op.cit., p. 296.

'reason' that does so.

This is not to suggest that the argument is without difficulty. Both of its premisses are open to challenge: first, that 'moral distinctions' are 'passions' (in Hume's terminology, "impressions" rather than "ideas"); and, secondly, that 'reason' has no influence over 'passions'. Now the first one, as I have suggested, takes us to the heart of his emotivist theory of moral philosophy. While his 'emotivist' analysis may be treated separately (I shall do so later), it is apparent that its strength is threatened (at least as he states it) if he fails to support the second premiss that "reason is perfectly inert, and can never either prevent or produce any action or affection."¹ This is his challenge:

"As long as it is allow'd that reason has no influence on our passions and actions, he writes, "'tis vain to pretend,² that morality is discover'd only by a deduction of reason".

In his endeavour to support his premiss Hume uses three main arguments. In introducing the first of these he feels that he can quickly dismiss the possibility that "abstract or demonstrative" reasoning might ever motivate an action.

"I believe it scarce will be asserted, that the first species of reasoning alone is ever the cause of any action. As its proper province is the world of ideas, and as the will always places us in that of realities, demonstration and volition seem, upon that account, to be totally remov'd, from each other".³

It should be noted that in this statement and in the argument that follows he concerns himself only with the motivation of actions and not of passions; later, however, he makes the transition in an argument which

¹Ibid., p. 458.
³Treatise, p. 413.

²Ibid., p. 457.

is acceptable if one accepts his use of the word "reason". It is in the later argument that Hume wrote one of his most often quoted phrases:

"Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."¹

His meaning in this statement will become clearer as we proceed.

In his first argument to 'prove' that 'reason' cannot be a motive to action, his example for 'demonstrative reasoning' is 'mathematical reasoning'. While acknowledging that "mathematics, indeed, are useful in all mechanical operations, and arithmetic in almost every art and profession",² Hume maintains that such reasoning in itself does not cause any action. "Mechanics," on the other hand, is a separate activity, "the art of regulating the motions of bodies to some design'd end or purpose"; but, whatever else may be the causes or motivations to achieve such ends or purposes, it cannot be demonstrative reasoning. Hume suggests that if a merchant wishes to know the "sum total of his accounts with another person", it is not "abstract or demonstrative reasoning" that motivates him to making the calculations, but rather the desire to pay his own debts, or to obtain money for marketing. Obviously, as Hume allows, such mathematical reasoning has an indirect influence, since the conclusions of one's calculations will have a bearing upon what one is then motivated to do. As he says, "abstract or demonstrative reasoning...never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects." Thus he quickly leads us away from further consideration of demonstrative reasoning into the consideration of "the second operation of the understanding", that is, 'probable reasoning', or reasoning concerning causes and effects.

¹Ibid., p. 415.

²Ibid., p. 413.

Can it be true that demonstrative reasoning can never be a motive to action? Of course when we ask this question in this way we commit ourselves to using Hume's methods of simple psychology (to set up a model, that is, of 'demonstrative reasoning' and to observe by simple observation whether or not it is a motive to action.) Such a procedure is of course a matter for the psychologist rather than the philosopher; however, it seems worth considering since it throws further light on an aspect of Hume's method. The first thing to be noted is that Hume in effect stipulates that the phrase "demonstrative reasoning" is not to be used to refer to premisses, conclusions, or 'steps' within mathematical or logical arguments. It is to be used only for what he terms "abstract relations of our ideas", the 'transition', as it were, between the 'steps' of an argument leading to a conclusion. Now if the phrase "demonstrative reasoning" is thus restricted in meaning it would be difficult to disagree with him. It is difficult to imagine how any 'abstract relations of our ideas' could ever motivate an action. We might well ask, however, if he has not been arbitrary in thus stipulating how he wishes us to use the word "reason". So long as we think only of his model of 'mathematical reasoning' it is difficult to avoid his conclusions; but this it seems is partly because the 'objects' of such reasoning are highly abstract. It is possible, however, to conceive of an example of deductive reasoning in which a conclusion may be drawn which could motivate an action. Consider, for example, the following anecdote which is often quoted in logic texts as an example of the derivation of new information from two premisses:

"While talking of his early experiences as a priest, an elderly abbé responded to the comment that the secrets of the confessional must often be of a kind disturbing to a young man, by admitting that it had indeed been so in his case, as the first confession

he ever heard was a confession of murder. Shortly after his departure his visit was mentioned to a later caller, a local proprietor and notability, who remarked that the abbé and he were very old acquaintances. 'Indeed,' he added, 'I was the abbé's first penitent'.¹

Now if the person who had been talking to the abbé and to the later caller happened to be the kind of person who felt duty-bound to report his conclusion, one may well imagine how a conclusion of an instance of 'demonstrative reasoning' could motivate an action. Hume has said, however, that the 'objects' of demonstrative reasoning are 'ideas', and to say that we appear to react or to be motivated by 'ideas' would contradict his thesis, for part of his argument against reason as a motive is that we are motivated by 'impressions' and not 'ideas'. It may of course be argued that the conclusion in this example is an 'impression', and thus his thesis would not be contradicted; but, even so, it would be difficult to deny that the conclusion is an integral part of a case of 'demonstrative reasoning'. By what right, we may now ask, does Hume insist that the word "reason" should be used for only the 'relations' between such a conclusion and its preceding premisses? Would it be an unconventional stipulation of the use of language to say that the word "reason" may also be used to include premisses and conclusions, without which, it may be said, the word "relations" in this context would be incomprehensible? Obviously, as Mr. Basson points out, Hume's is not a "demonstrative proof",² but is rather a "persuasive" argument. If we accept the terms of his argument it is indeed persuasive, but if we challenge them it is less so, and indeed may be said to be unsatisfactory.

In his next main argument to 'prove' that reason is not a motive to action, Hume is concerned with the second of his categories of reason,

¹Angus Sinclair, The Traditional Formal Logic, 5th Ed., p. 45.

²Basson, David Hume, p. 90.

that is 'probable reasoning'. Like so many of his arguments, this one also is more appropriately in the realm of psychology. Furthermore, it is, again, introspective psychology and as such is liable to be opposed, with little hope of resolution, by those who interpret their introspective experience differently. Hume interprets his introspections in the following manner. From our past experience we know what will probably cause us pain and pleasure. Then, "when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure", it is "obvious", he says, that "we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction."

"Tis also obvious," he continues, "that this emotion rests not here, but making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with its original one by the relation of cause and effect. Here then reasoning takes place to discover this relation; and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation. But 'tis evident in this case, that the impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it. 'Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object: and these emotions extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object, as they are pointed out to us by reason and experience. It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us."¹

In this argument the word "reason" is again used to denote 'relations', but whereas in 'demonstrative reasoning' Hume is interested in 'relations between ideas', in 'probable reasoning' he is concerned with 'causal relations' between 'objects' which we term "causes" and "effects". Here, as in the preceding argument, he is not primarily interested in the 'objects' in our reasoning, but rather with the 'transition' between the 'objects', or, in other words, 'causal relations'. "Reason",

¹Treatise, p. 414.

as he says, (meaning in this case "probable reasoning") "is nothing but the discovery" of the "connexion" between "causes" and "effects". If we appear to be motivated by an argument, Hume would say that we are not motivated by the reasoning involved in the argument, but by the 'objects' with which reasoning deals. If we accept that "reason is nothing but the discovery" of these causal relations, as in the argument for 'demonstrative reasoning', it is difficult not to agree with Hume that such reasoning cannot be said to motivate actions. But if Hume's use of the word "reason" in the earlier argument is unduly narrow, it is even moreso in this one, since in 'probable reasoning' we are dealing directly with 'matters of fact and existence'; and what I have said about the first argument at least equally applies here. Can we not, that is, use the word "reason" to include the 'steps', especially the 'conclusion' derived by our 'probable reasoning'? Like the argument about 'demonstrative reasoning', this one similarly is not conclusive. But even if one might say that Hume unduly restricted the use of the word "reason", and that in some sense 'reasoning' (not necessarily synonymous with the word "reason") might motivate 'actions', this would not necessarily undermine Hume's emotivist moral philosophy. This will become apparent as we proceed. The significant question, however we may appear to be motivated, is: can we say that our ethical statements may be given a cognitivist analysis? Hume, it seemed, was unduly frightened by the word "reason".

The third argument I wish to consider is the one which Hume obviously felt was of greatest importance since he chose to repeat it and amplify it in Book III of the Treatise,¹ having postulated it first

¹Cf., Enquiry, p. 290.

in the section we have been considering in Book II. And it obviously is more important than the earlier ones since, as we shall see, it raises questions which are still crucial for moral philosophers. It is indeed in this argument that Hume poses the challenge which I have taken as the underlying problem for this thesis. This argument also is dependent on his epistemology, specifically on his assumptions limiting reason to 'demonstrative reasoning' and 'probable reasoning'. He introduces the argument in Book III in the following manner:

"Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason."¹

The language in this quotation is perhaps a trifle unfortunate. One might speculate, for example, about his use of the word "real".² Hume's intentions are apparent, however, and if we were to state them in terms which would be more acceptable today we might say that "reason is concerned with validity and invalidity, and probable truth and probable falsehood; and any argument that cannot be considered either in terms of the principles of logic or axioms of mathematics, or in terms of accepted inductive procedures, cannot be said to be a concern of reason." Accepting that this is his intention we may continue with the next phase of his argument.

"Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason."³

¹Treatise, p. 458.

²Cf., Raphael, The Moral Sense, pp. 51-2.

³Treatise, p. 458.

In this passage, in saying that "our passions, volitions, and actions" are "original facts and realities, compleat in themselves", Hume uses the language of the psychologist; but what he says here may be defended in terms of what he has previously said. Our "passions, volitions, and actions", that is, are not susceptible of being tested or assessed by either logical norms or inductive procedures for either validity or probable truth. Whatever, then, might be our criteria for 'judging' them, he argues, we do not find such criteria within 'reason'.

At this point he reinforces his argument with an analysis which should be familiar to all students of moral philosophy. "Actions," he writes, "do not derive their merit from a conformity to reason, nor their blame from a contrariety to it...." This point is made more succinctly in the Enquiry when he writes, "Hence the great difference between a mistake of fact and one of right; and hence the reason why the one is commonly critical and not the other."¹ In the Treatise he goes on to say, "Actions may be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable." (We remember of course that the words "reasonable" and "unreasonable" have reference only to 'demonstrative' and 'probable' reasoning.) And later in the same section in the Treatise he writes the following often-quoted passage:

"In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought or ought not."²

Mr. Basson says of this argument that it, like the earlier ones, is

¹Enquiry, p. 290.

²Treatise, p. 469.

"persuasive" and not "conclusive",¹ and this is so. Hume has not proved, that is, that ethical value statements may not be derived from factual statements. However, he has clearly set up a formidable challenge to those who would disagree with him. Whatever else he says, he clearly asserts that ethical value statements should not be considered as if they were like factual statements; and there would be few today who would disagree. Any philosopher who would maintain that there is a logical relationship between factual statements and value judgments must seriously consider Hume's challenge.

Hume was of course aware that in our language we do speak of actions as being "reasonable" and "unreasonable"; but this, he felt, is no argument for saying that "moral distinctions are derived from reason".

"'Tis only in two senses," he writes, "that any affection may be called unreasonable. First, when a passion, such as hope or fear, grief or joy, despair or security, is founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, when in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it."²

Then he goes on to write a sentence which must remain a scandal to all cognitivists:

"'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger."

If the word "reason" is restricted in its use to the two categories of 'cognition' stipulated by Hume, this could hardly be denied. Again, as we may see, a third category of cognition would have to be supported before one could conclusively say that Hume is misguided.

¹Op. cit., p. 102.

²Treatise, p. 416.

He goes on in the same passage to speak of another source of possible confusion which might lead some people to say that some of our actions and judgments are "determinations of reason".

"Reason", he says, "exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion; and except in the more sublime disquisitions of philosophy, or in the frivolous subtilties of the schools, scarce ever conveys any pleasure or uneasiness."

Thus, he says, there is a danger of supposing that some of our "calm" and "tranquil" passions are activities of "reason". Among such "calm desires and tendencies", Hume lists "benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil". Now Hume's language in this particular argument is, again, hopelessly in the realm of psychology, as is much of his language concerning 'impressions' and 'ideas'; and unfortunately it could lead to a reaction in the same kind of language. In his book on Hume, for example, D.G.C. MacNabb expresses some uneasiness over Hume's restrictive definition of 'reason', and he lists several categories of psychological experience which he would wish to include within his use of the word "reason".

"Now it seems to me," writes Mr. MacNabb, "that this tendency to judge impartially and in accordance with general rules, this tendency to avoid contradiction, disagreement and confusion, this aversion to the arbitrary, the personal and the subjective, is something which it is not improper to call 'reason'."¹

After associating his suggestion with Kant by saying that "it is very like what Kant called practical reason, the subordination of our maxims to universal laws", Mr. MacNabb then writes the following passage:

"If it be once granted that this is a proper use of the term 'reason', then there is a form of reasoning with

¹MacNabb, David Hume, p. 166. (My underlining.)

regard to which Hume's objections to the influence of reason on conduct and moral judgment are not intended to apply."

Before he concludes his argument, Mr. MacNabb does grant that his difference with Hume is "terminological" rather than one of "substance and fact"; and this is obvious when one considers the words which I have underlined in the above quotation. All of the key words may be said to be 'attitudinal' or 'emotive' rather than 'cognitive', and Hume would have had little difficulty in indicating that this opposition to his use of the word "reason" does not amount to a significant objection to his anti-cognitivist argument.

These, then, are Hume's main arguments in the Treatise to prove that "moral distinctions are not derived from reason". As we have seen, they depend largely on his unproved epistemological assumptions, specifically on those asserting that there are only two categories of 'cognition', namely 'demonstrative reasoning' and 'probable reasoning'. Thus some cognitivists, as we have seen earlier, would charge that Hume has bypassed the essential point. They could well agree with Hume, that is, in allowing that neither demonstrative nor probable reasoning could directly motivate moral judgments; but in insisting that there is a third category of 'cognition' they would insist that it is this category which allows us to 'intuit' the 'rightness' or 'goodness' of people and actions. But to defend this position, 'intellectual intuitionists' and other cognitivists must sooner or later face Kant's problem. They must assume, that is, that there are, in some sense, "synthetic a priori propositions". And if Kant's arguments for the "synthetic a priori" may be taken as among the most cogent, as I believe they are, it may be said that for this position, as for Hume's, the arguments are less than conclusive---are, in fact, persuasive. Considering the challenges posed

by Hume, however, as well as the vagueness and difficulty of cognitivist arguments for 'the a priori', I find Hume's position generally more persuasive.

The fact that arguments for a philosophic position are, in the end, no more than persuasive cannot be held against that position unless one is willing to give up the activity of philosophy.¹ To say, that is, that arguments for a philosophic position must be wholly conclusive or demonstrative would be to hold the assumption to which Leibniz, Spinoza, and other rationalists vainly aspired when they hoped to found philosophy on the model of mathematics, or the assumption of John Stuart Mill when he vainly aspired to establish an inductive logic which would give the same degree of 'certainty' as deductive logic. While arguments within a philosophic position may well be demonstrably valid (or invalid) the arguments in support of that position must ultimately fall short of being conclusive. Even if a philosopher says that his only appropriate activity is that of conducting a logical analysis of language, he cannot conclusively demonstrate or prove that this is his only appropriate activity by means of the activity itself. If we are, then, to engage in the activity of philosophy, we must content ourselves with arguments which are, finally, no more than persuasive. This of course raises awkward questions about criteria for persuasiveness but at this point, fortunately, we need say no more than that Hume's challenge to those who would assume that there must be 'synthetic a priori propositions' remains an effective persuasive weapon against such a position, and thus, indirectly, a persuasive support for his more agnostic position. (I shall have to

¹Cf. A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge, p. 30, "...much philosophizing consists in persuasive work...."

return to this point when I consider what Stevenson says about persuasion.)

Section 3

Believing that he has effectively dealt with cognitivists, Hume now proceeds to the positive aspect of his moral philosophy, that is, the postulating of his emotivist theory. Hume had of course outlined his emotivist theory throughout his anti-cognitivist arguments, even before he directly introduced it in Section II ("Moral distinctions deriv'd from a moral sense") in Book III, Part I of the Treatise. The gist of his introduction of it, in the opening paragraph of Section II, is as follows:

"...since vice and virtue are not discoverable merely by reason, or the comparison of ideas, it must be by means of some impression or sentiment they occasion, that we are able to mark the difference betwixt them...the exclusion of the one is a convincing argument for the other."¹

This argument, depending as it does on his preceding anti-cognitivist argument, cannot be said to be conclusive. But, as I have suggested, if the anti-cognitivist arguments are not conclusive, they are by no means without plausibility; and when they are rephrased in non-psychological language they constitute a severe challenge to any would-be cognitivist---as Kant was willing to acknowledge. Restating Hume's position in language more appropriate to today, it might be said that he has asserted, in effect, that all cognitive statements must be expressed in terms either of logical relations or probability. But ethical statements cannot be said to fall in either of these categories; thus, unless cognitivists can demonstrate some third class of cognitive statements, ethical statements must be non-cognitive (or, as Hume says in

¹Treatise, p. 470.

effect, 'emotive'). With qualifications, as we shall see, contemporary 'emotivists' use arguments similar to Hume's.¹

In setting forth his theory of moral philosophy Hume professes to be an empirical scientist, and thus, as we have so often seen, his language is more appropriate to the psychologist and the sociologist of morals. He was also, however, very much the moral philosopher, for not only does he suggest an analysis of ethical statements, but he also uses some of the methods of contemporary moral philosophy. For example, when he undertakes to "analyse that complication of mental qualities, which form what, in common life, we call Personal Merit", one of his two main methods was what we now would call an analysis of the language of morals (the other method being of course his so-called "experimental method"). Here is what he says on this point:

"The very nature of language guides us almost infallibly in forming a judgment of this nature; and as every tongue possesses one set of words which are taken in a good sense, and another in the opposite, the least acquaintance with the idiom suffices, without any reasoning, to direct us in collecting and arranging the estimable qualities of men."²

And a careful consideration of his writings will reveal that, to a significant extent, he does in fact rely on analyses of the language of morals.³ In what follows I shall be concerned with the main results of what I shall call his "analysis".

There are some differences of emphasis between what he says in the Treatise and what he says in the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, but, fundamentally, his theory of moral philosophy is the same in each book. In each he lists the same catalogue of the "sources" of

¹cf., Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, p. 54.

²Enquiry, p. 174.

³Cf., Enquiry, p. 272.

our moral "sentiments", and stripped of its psychological language, what this amounts to is a classification of four categories of moral statements. They are as follows: those concerning that which is (1) useful to others, (2) useful to the person himself, (3) agreeable to others, and (4) agreeable to the person himself.¹ Of greater importance is that, according to Hume, every ethical statement, however it is classified among these four groups, may be 'explained' in the same way. That is to say, he postulates the same, fundamental emotivist analysis for all ethical statements. This basic analysis, it is to be emphasized, is the same in both the Treatise and the Enquiry; and this is apparent when we compare the two following quotations, the first from the Treatise, and the second from the Enquiry:

- (1) "...when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it."²
- (2) "The hypothesis which we embrace is plain. It maintains that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary."³

First, I should like to consider more fully what Hume means by these quotations. Later I shall have to consider qualifications which he would make to render his theory less 'subjective'.

His emotivist theory is perhaps easiest understood if considered as analogous to the beliefs that many people would accept in their statements about works of art. Hume often uses the analogy with aesthetics in explaining his moral philosophy, and his language, even when it is not consciously drawing on the analogy, is perhaps best

¹Treatise, p. 591; and Enquiry, Chs. VI-IX, esp. 269n.
²Treatise, p. 469; Cf., p. 475. ³Enquiry, p. 289.

understood in such terms. Here, for example, is a phrase taken from a passage in the Treatise in which he is discussing 'justice'.

"The approbation of moral qualities most certainly is not deriv'd from reason, or any comparison of ideas; but proceeds entirely from moral taste, and from certain sentiments of pleasure and disgust, which arise upon the contemplation and view of particular qualities or characters."¹

He consciously draws upon the analogy in other passages, among which is the following passage from the Enquiry:

"This doctrine will become still more evident, if we compare moral beauty with natural, to which in many particulars it bears so near a resemblance....Euclid has fully explained all the qualities of the circle; but has not in any proposition said a word of its beauty. The reason is evident. The beauty is not a quality of the circle. It lies not in any part of the line, whose parts are equally distant from a common centre. It is only the effect which that figure produces upon the mind, whose peculiar fabric or structure renders it susceptible of such sentiments. In vain would you look for it in the circle, or seek it, either by your senses or by mathematical reasoning, in all the properties of that figure."²

And after citing the example of architecture which may appear to a spectator to be beautiful, he writes:

"Till such a spectator appear, there is nothing but a figure of such particular dimensions and proportions: from his sentiments alone arise its elegance and beauty."³

Following this 'analysis' of aesthetic judgments Hume concludes that moral judgments may similarly be analysed:

"...crime or immorality," he writes, "is no particular fact or relation, which can be the object of the understanding, but arises entirely from the sentiment of disapprobation, which, by the structure of human nature, we unavoidably feel on the apprehension of barbarity or treachery."⁴

Now of course many philosophers will not accept this analogy. D. Daiches Raphael, for example, has the following to say:

¹Treatise, p. 581.

²Enquiry, pp. 291-2.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 293; Cf., Treatise, p. 475.

"I must say before I go on that I am assuming, perhaps rashly, that Hume's elucidation of aesthetic statements is true, though I do not think a similar elucidation of moral statements is true."¹

We must, then, consider what is involved in saying, as Hume says, that an ethical statement is "in many particulars" similar to aesthetic statements.

Especially from the two quotations I have cited earlier,² as well as from other passages in his writings, we may interpret him as saying that in making an ethical statement, such as "X is virtuous", I signify or indicate or evince my feeling of moral approval for X. Later he elaborates this point.

"To have the sense of virtue," he writes, "is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration."³

Now, two points are to be noted in what Hume says. First, he cannot be interpreted as saying that the statement, "X is virtuous", is equivalent in meaning to the statement, "I have a feeling of moral approval for X". To repeat his point, when I make an ethical statement or pronouncement, "X is virtuous", I indicate or signify or evince my feeling of moral approval for X, but I am not saying anything about this feeling. If the statement, "X is virtuous", were said to be equivalent in meaning to the statement, "I have a feeling of moral approval for X", this would be to say that ethical statements are in effect empirical statements about our feeling states, and this could be assessed in terms of the categories 'probably true' or 'probably false'. As we have seen, however, in saying that morality is not a matter of reason, Hume emphatically makes the point about moral distinctions (or ethical statements) that it is

¹Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 78.

²Above, p.47.

³Treatise, p. 471

"impossible (that)...they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason."¹ The same distinction has been clearly made in our own time by Professor Ayer in the following passage:

"The distinction between the expression of feeling and the assertion of feeling is complicated by the fact that the assertion that one has a feeling often accompanies the expression of that feeling, and is then, indeed a factor in the expression of that feeling. Thus I may simultaneously express boredom and say that I am bored, and in that case my utterance of the words, 'I am bored', is one of the circumstances which make it true to say that I am expressing boredom. But I can express boredom without actually saying that I am bored. I can express it by my tone and gestures, while making a statement about something wholly unconnected with it, or by an ejaculation, or without uttering any words at all. So that even if the assertion that one has a certain feeling always involves the expression of that feeling, the expression of a feeling assuredly does not always involve the assertion that one has it."

The point of this distinction, so far as it concerns his own theory, is then made in the following passage:

"And this is the important point to grasp in considering the distinction between our theory and the ordinary subjectivist theory. For whereas the subjectivist holds that ethical statements actually assert the existence of certain feelings, we hold that ethical statements are expressions and excitants of feeling which do not necessarily involve any assertions."²

Before discussing this first point I should like to mention the second which is related. From what Hume says, we would be in error if we said that, for him, the term "moral goodness" is equivalent in meaning to the term "pleasure", and "moral badness" to "pain". In part, the same distinction may be made as was noted in the preceding paragraph. That is to say, on any occasion when I make a statement in which I include an ethical value term, such as "good", the term may serve only as an indication of my feeling of pleasure; but I may have the feeling

¹Op. Cit., p. 458.

²Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, pp. 109-110.

of pleasure without using the term "good" at all. In part, also, Hume makes a distinction between types of 'pleasures', and on a number of occasions when he refers to the 'moral sentiment' he qualifies his references with some such phrase as "a particular kind".¹ He also mentions that "the good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us; but may still command our esteem and respect."² Such a 'feeling' may be distinguished in practice, he suggests, from 'non-moral feelings', in the same manner as we might distinguish between the aesthetic (pleasant) feelings we might have for our enemy's fine voice, and our personal (painful) feelings for the enemy himself. For Hume, then, a value term, such as "good", like the value statement of which it is a part, may signify or evince a feeling of 'pleasure of a particular kind'; but, to repeat, the term "good" is not equivalent in meaning either to the term "pleasure" or to the phrase "pleasure of a particular kind".

An obvious question arises in any consideration of this theory. When one person says of an ethical action or situation or agent, "X is right", and another says, "No, X is wrong", are they simply evincing or indicating their respective and different feelings about X? If what I have said so far about Hume's theory is sound this would follow. Does not this, then, amount to saying, as one so often says in disagreement about works of art, "Everyone to his own taste"? This, also, follows. Is there any point then in discussing ethical situations further, after different spectators have offered their different statements? To this, Hume would reply that there is; and in his reply, first, he would amplify the analysis we have been discussing, and, secondly, he would make a

¹Cf., quotation on page 49 above.

²Treatise, p. 472.



sociological amendment to his analysis which, as I have suggested earlier, has the effect of making his analysis of ethical statements appear to be 'subjective'---and his general theory less consistent.

Both in the Treatise and the Enquiry Hume allows for speculation about ethical situations, but he is of course insistent that when we do speculate about such situations we attend to matters of 'fact' and not of 'right'.¹ He is explicit nonetheless in allowing that such speculations about matters of 'fact' may and do lead to changes of our ethical feelings (hence also our ethical statements about the situation). As we have seen earlier, he was prepared to say the following:

"The end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty; and, by proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue, beget correspondent habits, and engage us to avoid the one, and embrace the other."²

This would be meaningless, however, unless man is by nature so constituted that he will react approvingly or disapprovingly to ethical situations; and on this point Hume goes on to make the following sociological proposition. (This, by the way, is not the sociological statement which, as I have suggested, would lead to amending his analysis; however, as we shall see shortly, it is a step in that direction):

"The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praise-worthy or blameable... that which renders morality an active principle and constitutes virtue our happiness, and vice our misery...depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species."³

With this as an underlying assumption Hume may allow for speculation about matters of fact and existence which may lead to an altering of our moral feelings. Here is what he says:

"...in order to pave the way for such a sentiment, and give a

¹Enquiry, p. 290, Cf. Treatise, pp. 416 & 458
²Op. cit., p. 172
³Enquiry, pp. 172-3.

proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distinct comparisons formed, complicated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained....In many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection. There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind."¹

Now if we took Hume no further than this we could allow for speculation about moral situations without any necessary agreement; but, in the preceding passage I have underlined key words which suggest that Hume is assuming that there are criteria, or, to use his own words from the same context, "general principles", which may lead disputants to the point at which there may be an agreement in their ethical feelings, and, further, that such "general principles" are in some sense "right", "proper", "correct", and not "false". This, ultimately, is indeed the conclusion to which Hume is led both in the Treatise and the Enquiry (although his treatment varies somewhat in each book). It is unnecessary to examine his arguments in detail. It is sufficient to say that, especially through an examination of the concept of "justice", he was led to assert that there are occasions when our initial feelings might not be beneficial to our society, but that, through "public praise and blame...(and) private education and instruction" our "esteem for justice" may be increased.² Ultimately, in both books, it is this 'utilitarian' concern which becomes dominant. In the Treatise, he undertakes to provide what amounts to a psychological and sociological explanation for the fact that man does make ethical statements approving what is

¹Ibid., (my underlining), Cf. Treatise, pp. 500, 577, 581-585, 618.
²Treatise, p. 500.

agreeable and of utility value to others, and his explanation, finally, is that there is a "principle" of "sympathy" which is "the chief source of moral distinctions".¹ But in the Enquiry, as Kemp Smith points out, Hume gives up the "psychological-mechanistic explanation" of the "source of moral distinctions" and contents himself with saying that we simply have to accept that "everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will. Here is a principle, which accounts, in great part, for the origin of morality..." In a revealing footnote Hume writes the following:

"It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general. No man is absolutely indifferent to the happiness and misery of others. The first has a natural tendency to give pleasure; the second, pain. It is not probable, that these principles can be resolved into principles more simple and universal, whatever attempts may have been made to that purpose".²

If Hume had been content simply to say that through an analysis of morals it is apparent that most people seem to evaluate utilitarian concerns as being more praiseworthy than concerns of self-interest, his theory would have subsequently faced less philosophic criticism, although it might well have been subject to the criticism of sociologists of morals. He appeared to want to say more, however, for not only does he suggest that the principle of utility is the chief or most important principle of morals, but, also, it is a general or universal principle shared by all or most men. One of the most succinct expressions of this thesis is apparent in the following passage from the Enquiry:

¹Op.cit., p. 618; Cf., pp. 576-7.

²Enquiry, p. 219n.

"The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it."¹

With such a general principle of "humanity", Hume could hope that well-intentioned men might be able to reach what would be termed an "agreement in feeling states" about specific moral actions and agents (and thus an 'agreement' in the ethical statements which signify such feeling states). This point should be remembered, for, as we shall see, it has certain similarities with Professor Stevenson's theory.

The analysis of ethical statements in Hume's amended and less subjective theory would have to be different from the analysis suggested earlier. When I now make the statement, "X is virtuous", this would signify that I have a feeling of moral approval for X, and all or most other people would similarly have feelings of moral approval for X. Some commentators² assume too readily, I believe, that from Hume's qualified theory, the ethical statement, "X is virtuous", could be analysed as being equivalent to the empirical statement, "All or most men would have feelings of approval for X". But this certainly does not accord with Hume's intentions, since both in the Treatise and the Enquiry, as I have indicated earlier,³ the basis of all ethical statements is an individual "spectator's" feelings of approval or disapproval. It is often difficult to interpret Hume, but there can be no doubt about this point. Fundamentally, for him, morality is a matter of taste, and an individual's only 'guides' are his own feelings. Hume's amendment appears to be rather a sociological supplement to his radical subjectivism, a support, as it were, based on the empirical generalization that,

¹Enquiry, p. 272. Cf., Treatise, p. 547n.

²See: D.D. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 76; C.D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 85; A.H. Basson, David Hume, pp. 103-104.

³Above, p.47.

as he believed, all or most men seem to 'agree' in their ethical behaviour. But the amendment simply complicates that analysis, for the amended analysis is obviously inconsistent within itself. I simply cannot say, that is, that the statement, "X is virtuous", would signify that I have a feeling or moral approval for X, and all or most other people would similarly have feelings of approval for X. The difficulty is of course that I am aware that my ethical 'feelings' at any moment simply do not always accord with what is generally approved. Hume himself points out that my current ethical feelings (thus, ethical statements) are subject to "correction" (although possibly they are 'right' and the feelings of all or most others are in need of 'correction'). In any event, I cannot rely upon my feelings to be guides for what is approved by "all or most people", or, to limit it further, for what is generally approved in my own 'society'. Hume's proposed amendment cannot then be said to be a fair representation of the language of morals.

As I have said in the preceding paragraph, the analysis most often assumed for the amended theory is that the ethical statement, "X is virtuous", is equivalent to the proposition that all or most men would have feelings of moral approval for X. This, as I have said, is a dubious interpretation of Hume; but even if it were a fair interpretation it would not help the theory. The difficulty, at least for Hume's theory, is that the statement, "All or most people would have feelings of moral approval for X", is an empirical statement, the kind that would be tested, if it could be tested, by a sociologist-cum-psychologist. Disputes about ethical situations should then be able to be decided, at least in principle, by an empirical investigation, the results of which would be asserted in the form of probability statements, or, to use Hume's language, in terms of "probable reasoning". This, however, as

we remember, is the second and more important of the uses of the word "reason" which Hume was so concerned to reject when he argued that "moral distinctions are not derived from reason". The analysis would be a contradiction of the thesis that it is "impossible that moral distinctions can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason". To point out this inconsistency, however, amounts to no more than an argumentum ad hominem; but lest it be suggested that the amended theory is preferable to the radical subjectivism (which, as I maintain, is his fundamental theory) it should be pointed out that it does not avoid serious difficulties, even with the dubious analysis which is admittedly preferable to the suggested analysis in the preceding paragraph.

Ironically, Professor Ayer indicates the difficulties of Hume's amended theory when, in defense of his own "radical subjectivism",¹ (which is not dissimilar to Hume's theory before being amended), he rejects another and more common form of subjectivism. His point (again ironically) is much the same point that was made by Hume in the well-known passage in which he rejected ethical theories which begin with 'is-type' propositions but conclude with 'ought-type' propositions. Professor Ayer explains his position as follows:

"...what we are denying is that the suggested reduction of ethical to non-ethical statements is consistent with the conventions of our actual language. That is, we reject utilitarianism and subjectivism, not as proposals to replace our existing ethical notions by new ones, but as analyses of our existing ethical notions. Our contention is simply that, in our language, sentences which contain normative ethical symbols are not equivalent to sentences which express psychological propositions, or indeed empirical propositions of any kind."²

¹Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, p. 109.

²Ibid., p. 105.

Thus, in the paragraph preceding this explanation, Professor Ayer had written the following:

"We reject the subjectivist view that to call an action right, or a thing good, is to say that it is generally approved of, because it is not self-contradictory to assert that some actions which are generally approved of are not right, or that some things which are generally approved of are not good."¹

Hume, above all, would have to agree with this criticism, since, as I have mentioned earlier, he must allow that there will be occasions when I say "X is virtuous", while being aware that X is not generally approved of.

From these considerations it is apparent that the amendments to Hume's analysis of ethical statements unnecessarily complicate his theory. I would suggest, then, that his strongest position is the 'radical subjectivist-emotivist' theory which is fundamental to his philosophy. From this position, to recapitulate, the ethical statement, "X is virtuous", indicates or signifies or evinces my feeling of moral approval for X. The statement, "X is virtuous", is not equivalent in meaning, however, to the empirical statement, "I have a feeling of moral approval for X." Nor can it be said of his theory that the relevant value word in any ethical statement is equivalent in meaning to the word "pleasure", even though the relevant ethical value word might be said to indicate or evince a 'pleasant feeling of a particular kind'. Despite the elements of psychology and sociology which persist in his theory, Hume at his most consistent cannot be interpreted as saying that ethical statements are equivalent to empirical statements, nor that ethical value words are equivalent in meaning to words describing feeling states. He was quite clear, then, in insisting upon what in our day has

¹Ibid., p. 104.

been termed the "autonomy of morals". Thus his radical subjectivist theory would avoid some obvious objections from those, like Professor Ayer, who argue that a lack of autonomy in the language of morals leads to contradictions.

A persistent weakness of Hume's radical subjectivist theory, however, is that it is inevitably tied to language which is unnecessarily psychological. Even in saying that the statement, "X is virtuous", indicates or signifies a 'feeling' of moral approval, we are in some way relating ethical statements, through introspective psychology, to our 'feelings'. This inevitably leads to the psychological-sociological observation (which Hume foresaw) that feelings are "very variable", and that "we sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners."¹ One might have expected, then, that Hume would have said that we might neither approve nor disapprove of ethical behaviour which does not directly affect us. Obviously such a theory would not accord with the language of morals, and of course Hume was far too astute to ignore the point, as the following passage indicates:

"But notwithstanding the variations of our sympathy, we give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in England. They appear equally virtuous, and recommend themselves equally to the esteem of the judicious spectator."²

How, then, can Hume support his theory?

He attempts to explain the apparent difficulty by saying that through our experience of moral intercourse we begin to realize that it would be impossible ever to "converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear

¹Treatise, pp. 580-1.

²Ibid., p. 581.

from his peculiar point of view." But his subsequent explanation is unconvincing. His central point is as follows:

"In order, therefore, to prevent those continual contradictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment of things, we fix on some steady and general points of view; and always in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation."¹

The difficulty is that, as a support for his psychological premiss relating ethical statements to feelings, Hume is compelled to rely on further empirical evidence (the evidence, by the way, appears to be somewhat like present-day psychological theories of empathy). Thus he subjects his position to further attack from any other psychologist who would similarly use empirical data which appears to be different. This is apparent, for example, in the following psychological criticism of Hume's argument by Dr. Raphael:

"It is not conceivable how a real sentiment can ever arise from a known imaginary sentiment; especially when our real sentiment is still kept in view, and is often acknowledged to be entirely distinct from the imaginary, and even sometimes opposite to it. I now feel completely indifferent to Verres, and know it. Yet, Hume tells me, when I judge Verres to have been a villain, I am so deceived by my imagination that I talk as if I felt a strong feeling of anger."²

The psychological base to Hume's theory is a fundamental flaw, and there is no way of getting around it. While saying this, however, we should of course give credit to Hume for so clearly suggesting the point of this criticism---that is, that ethical statements are different in kind from factual statements. This weakness in Hume's theory, along with his logical prescriptions to avoid the weakness, are extremely suggestive, and there is a lesson here for subsequent philosophers. Nowell-Smith, for example, after considering and agreeing with the objection raised

¹Ibid., p. 581.

²Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 91.

by Raphael, goes on to write the following:

"...the Moral Sense School were, I think, mistaken in construing moral approval and disapproval as feelings, since this suggests too strongly the analogy with itches, aches, and tickles. But they were right to connect moral appraisals and verdicts with approval and disapproval."¹

The point of this suggestion will become clearer in subsequent chapters when we consider moral philosophers (including of course Nowell-Smith) who, qua moral philosophers, are logical analysts of the language of morals, and who strive not to confuse their roles with that of psychologists and sociologists. For the present, however, I shall briefly indicate the type of analysis to which Hume's arguments point.

Following Hume's logical prescriptions, and using his radical subjectivist analysis minus its psychology, we would have a theory similar to current theories postulated by logical analysts. In a revised Humean theory, the ethical statement, "X is virtuous", indicates or signifies my moral approval for X. The psychological explanation of such moral approval, however, is no business of the philosopher qua philosopher; and of course there are many behaviourist psychologists today who say that any attempt at introspective psychology, even by psychologists, is misguided. The fact remains that an examination of our language indicates that we do morally approve and disapprove of agents and actions. But our language also indicates more. Negatively, a logical analysis of language indicates that ethical statements, whatever they are, are different from empirical statements and principles of logic and mathematics. Furthermore, such an analysis does not indicate any other kind of 'cognitive' statements; thus, as Hume said, there is no point in assuming that the 'basis' of

¹P.H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 177.

ethical statements is 'pure reason', 'intellectual intuition', or any other suggested 'cognitive faculty'. Hume's fundamental challenge to the synthetic a priori remains, and until it is overcome there is no point assuming more than we have a right to assume.

There are of course objections to this type of theory; but such objections have been considered by present-day followers of Hume, and since the revised theory is more appropriate to today, I shall consider the objections in subsequent chapters. I shall also consider qualifications which would be made by contemporary logical analysts of the language of morals. Perhaps even at this point we may begin to see what Professor Ayer meant, when he wrote:

"It is astonishing to find how much of what is thought to be distinctive in modern analytical philosophy was already foreshadowed in Hume's work."¹

¹Above, p.10.

CHAPTER II

A.J. AYER

Section 1

Professor Ayer begins the First Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic (published in 1936) with the following sentence:

"The views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the logical outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and David Hume."

Although his debt to Hume is, I believe, paramount, the separate but not dissimilar influences of the early Wittgenstein and the philosophers of 'the Vienna Circle' distinguish the writings of Ayer from earlier moral philosophers. Ayer himself has written elsewhere¹ that in their positivism philosophers of 'the Vienna Circle' (and what he says of them in this context equally applies to himself) were simply continuing an old philosophical tradition---the tradition established primarily by Hume. But their more rigorous application of logical techniques led to what might well be said to be a novel conception of the aim of philosophy. This conception, in brief, is that philosophy is not a set of doctrines or a 'way of life', but is an activity---the activity of the logical analysis of language. In looking at the writings of Ayer, as compared with those of Hume, we shall thus see some definite differences as well as some similarities.

Considering differences first, we will remember that, for Hume,

¹See above, p. 5.

philosophy should be an empirical science, and his aim, if not always his practice, was to "glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life...."¹ And as we have seen, many of the problems which arise in studying his writings have to do with his tendency to assume the role of the psychologist and the sociologist. Ayer, on the other hand, although most decidedly empirical in temperament and approach, is nevertheless careful to try to avoid being an empirical scientist in his philosophical activities. This distinction is clearly made by him in the opening paragraph of his book The Problem of Knowledge. In the section entitled "The method of philosophy" he writes as follows:

"The proof of a philosophical statement is not, or only very seldom, like the proof of a mathematical statement; it does not normally consist in formal demonstration. Neither is it like the proof of a statement in any of the descriptive sciences. Philosophical theories are not tested by observation."²

In addition to distinguishing between the respective roles of the empirical scientist and the philosopher, Ayer is concerned also to distinguish between the roles of the moralist and the moral philosopher.³ To make such a distinction is not of course the prerogative of the philosophical analyst, since any contemporary philosopher with an analytic temperament would probably make the same distinction. G.E. Moore made this distinction, for example,⁴ and his intention was to be concerned primarily with the meaning of general value words, especially the word "good". Nevertheless, he posed as "the fundamental question of Ethics--- the question: 'What things are goods or ends in themselves?'"⁵ Ayer would not ask such a question. The task of the philosopher who designates

¹Treatise, p. xxiii. ²Op. cit., p. 17. ³Above, p. 6.
⁴Moore, Principia Ethica, Ch. I; and Ethics, p. 7. ?
⁵Principia Ethica, p. 184.

himself as a "philosophical analyst" is, as Ayer expressed it, to "confine himself to works of clarification and analysis...."¹ The focus now, rather than including a concern for psychological and sociological data, and rather than asking and often begging moralistic questions, is confined to the logical analysis of language. Thus we have book titles such as Ayer's Language, Truth, and Logic, Stevenson's Ethics and Language, and Hare's The Language of Morals. This is not to say, however, that earlier philosophers were in no way concerned with the analysis of language, for, as we have seen,² Hume often uses methods which are similar to those of the contemporary philosophical analyst. Ayer, in fact, makes a point of saying that "the majority of those who are commonly supposed to have been great philosophers were primarily not metaphysicians but analysts";³ and, referring to Hume, he has this to say:

"It is true that Hume does not, so far as I know, actually put forward any view concerning the nature of philosophical propositions themselves, but those of his works which are commonly accounted philosophical are, apart from certain passages which deal with questions of psychology, works of analysis."⁴

Nevertheless, the explicit and exclusive concern for the analysis of language among many contemporary philosophers is a new emphasis in the history of philosophy. Thus this difference between Hume and his followers is immediately apparent when one undertakes to assess contemporary writings. On the other hand, there is a remarkable similarity in the empiricist temperament of Hume and his present-day followers. This is especially apparent when one reads Language, Truth, and Logic.

¹LTL, p. 51.
³LTL, p. 52.

²Above, Ch. I, p. 46.
⁴Ibid., p. 54.

Ayer is most like Hume in his positivistic, anti-metaphysical theory of knowledge. This is most succinctly expressed in the second and subsequent sentences in the Preface to the First Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic:

"Like Hume, I divide all genuine propositions into two classes: those which, in his terminology, concern 'relations of ideas', and those which concern 'matters of fact'. The former class comprises the a priori propositions of logic and pure mathematics, and these I allow to be necessary and certain only because they are analytic. That is, I maintain that the reason why these propositions cannot be confuted in experience is that they do not make any assertion about the empirical world, but simply record our determination to use symbols in a certain fashion. Propositions concerning empirical matters of fact, on the other hand, I hold to be hypotheses, which can be probable but never certain."

From this position Ayer rejects metaphysics, including theories of moral philosophy dependent on metaphysics. If a "putative proposition" does not satisfy his epistemological criteria, he suggests, "it is metaphysical, and...being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless." He continues:

"It will be found that much of what ordinarily passes for philosophy is metaphysical according to this criterion, and, in particular, that it cannot be significantly asserted that there is a non-empirical world of values, or that men have immortal souls, or that there is a transcendent God."

These passages are highly reminiscent of Hume, and, in a later passage, in a context concerned with the rejection of metaphysics, Ayer recalls Hume's "commit it then to the flames" passage.¹

"What is this," writes Ayer, "but a rhetorical version of our own thesis that a sentence which does not express either a formally true proposition or an empirical hypothesis is devoid of literal significance?"²

After 'rejecting' metaphysics, and after ruling out what might be called

¹Above, Ch. I, p. 26.

²LTL, p. 54.

the weaker metaphysics of the Kantian support for the possibility of 'synthetic a priori propositions' (in his chapter on "The A Priori"), it is not surprising, then, that in his chapter entitled, "Critique of Ethics and Theology", Ayer should not even concern himself with most of the traditional metaphysical theories (one significant exception, that of some of the theories dependent on claims to what has been termed "intellectual intuition", must be noted for later consideration).

So far as this thesis is concerned, the most important likeness to be noted between Ayer and Hume is Ayer's acceptance of an 'emotive theory of values' which is strikingly similar to Hume's. This is not to suggest that Ayer might not have been influenced by his contemporaries. It would appear indeed that the 'emotive theory of values' was 'in the air', so to speak, about that time. In 1923 Ogden and Richards had published their book, The Meaning of Meaning, in which they had elaborated an emotive theory of values similar to Ayer's. Then, in 1934, Professor W.H.F. Barnes had published a statement in "Analysis" which expressed, in germ, the same kind of emotivist theory which Ayer was shortly to expound. In 1935, from a somewhat different approach, Professor John Macmurray, in his Reason and Emotion, wrote that "for the determination of values we are dependent on our emotions...or those of someone else....A judgment of value can never be intellectual in its origin."¹ All of these writings and others, as well as those of C.L. Stevenson, who was to publish his first paper on the subject in 1937, may be said to be indebted to Hume.

Although in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic (published in 1947), Ayer is concerned to emphasize

¹ John Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, p. 36-7.

that what he has termed his "emotive analysis of ethical judgments" will stand independently of his positivist epistemology and is "valid on its own account", his acknowledgment of indebtedness to Hume applies as much to his emotivist analysis as it does to his epistemology. Obviously his theory of values should be logically consistent with his epistemology, but Ayer maintains that the emotive theory he postulates "is not the only theory that would have satisfied this requirement." While I shall indicate shortly that his version of the emotivist theory will point up the limitations of the 'verificationist' epistemology, what is of relevance at present is that among possible theories which he felt might be consistent with his epistemology he chose an emotivist analysis; and this analysis closely resembles the analysis which I have proposed in the previous chapter as being the logical outcome of Hume's prescriptions. Ayer's analysis, it must be noted, goes through some modifications in expression from its first statement in Language, Truth, and Logic, through the Introduction to its Second Edition, and, then, in his paper "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements", published in 1949. In this latter work, in fact, he allows that his manner of stating his early analysis is an "over-simplification"¹. Despite these modifications, however, the account has not significantly deviated from its first statement; thus I shall look to the early version first, noting later modifications when it is relevant to do so.

The general plan for the remainder of this chapter will be as follows: Section 2: further consideration of the relationship between Ayer's theory of knowledge and his moral philosophy; Section 3: the 'negative' phase of his analysis in which he rejects 'naturalistic'

¹Op. cit., in Philosophical Essays, p. 238.

and 'intuitionist' theories; Section 4: the introduction to the emotive theory in its initial expression (ethical statements are "mere pseudo-concepts"), and later modifications; Section 5; the positive statement of the emotive theory, and later modifications; and Section 6: a consideration of criticisms of the theory.

Section 2

In the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, Ayer points out that the emotive theory of values which he had developed in the first edition "has provoked a fair amount of criticism". But this criticism, he suggests, "has been directed more often against the positivistic principles on which the theory has been assumed to depend than against the theory itself."¹ It is then that he makes the point, noted earlier, that his emotivist theory of values can stand independently of his positivist epistemology.

"Consequently," he writes, "even if it could be shown that these other statements were invalid, this would not in itself refute the emotive analysis of ethical judgments; and in fact I believe this analysis to be valid on its own account."²

One might argue that a different theory of knowledge could logically permit a different analysis of ethical statements, and in that sense the epistemology compatible with, although not necessarily entailing, an ethical theory is important. For example, if one could effectively argue for the possibility of 'synthetic a priori propositions', in a general theory of knowledge, one might postulate some kind of 'cognitivist' theory of values. Nevertheless, so long as we are prepared to say that value statements are used in a different way from analytic and empirical statements, (and I am not prepared to suggest any other possibility), we

¹LTL, p. 20. In a footnote Ayer cites the criticism by Sir David Ross in Foundations of Ethics, pp. 30-41.

²Ibid.

may say that an attack on an epistemological theory is not necessarily an attack on a theory of values which is compatible with the epistemology. And while we may grant, as Ayer himself has readily acknowledged, that there are problems confronting anyone who would try to uphold the early versions of 'logical positivism', this does not necessarily entail that there are problems for his emotivist analysis of ethical judgments (even if, in fact, there are). Nevertheless, as we shall see, the effort to make a sharp distinction between his epistemology and moral philosophy is often severely strained. This is apparent, for example, in his assumption that analytic and empirical statements are, so to speak, first-class citizens of language as compared with value judgments or any other sentences which cannot, in principle, pass the 'verification' test. And this assumption will be seen to lead to more serious difficulties; for if the verification principle is accepted as the only test for 'meaningfulness', and if value sentences are thus said to be 'meaningless', then one must face the charge that such sentences as "Stealing money is right" and "Stealing money is not right" are not contradictory. It is nonsensical, that is, to say that 'meaningless' sentences are either not contradictory or contradictory. This is a charge which later disturbs Ayer, and, as I shall indicate, in his being compelled to allow that ethical judgments are in some sense meaningful, and that they may be said to be contradictory, he should modify more than simply the manner of expressing his emotivist analysis. In modifying his analysis, that is, he must at least implicitly acknowledge the limitations of the 'verificationist' theory of meaning---that is to say, it may be logically misleading to assume that the 'verification principle' should be able to be used for testing statements other than analytic and empirical statements. It may be argued therefore that the relations

between his epistemology and moral philosophy are much closer than he would wish to admit. Nonetheless, my concern in this work will be primarily with his emotive theory of values, and I shall treat it, so far as is possible, as if it were independent of his epistemology.

If Ayer's radical empiricist theory excludes at the outset the possibility of saying that value statements are literally significant propositions, why, we must ask, does he concern himself with values at all? Ayer's concern, as is apparent in the opening paragraph of his chapter, "Critique of Ethics and Theology", is to take account of the objection against him that statements of value, while not being empirical hypotheses, are nevertheless "genuine synthetic propositions". Obviously some account of them is demanded of the logical analyst of the language of morals. If statements of value are held to be "genuine synthetic propositions", he is faced with the implication that "the existence of ethics and aesthetics as branches of speculative knowledge presents an insuperable objection to (his) radical empiricist thesis." He must, then, give an "account of 'judgments of value' which is both satisfactory in itself and consistent with (his) general empiricist principles."¹

If statements of value are neither analytic nor empirical probability statements, and if, as according to Ayer, they are not "genuine synthetic propositions", what are they? Ayer's answer, at least in the first expression of it, is that "they are not in the literal sense significant, but are simply expressions of emotion which can be neither true nor false."² (He goes on to say that, although he will speak in this context of ethical 'statements', what he has to say about them "will be found to apply, mutatis mutandis, to the case of aesthetic statements

¹LTL., p. 102

²LTL., p. 103

also".) Later he makes an important qualification when he writes that not only do ethical 'statements' serve as "expressions", but they are also "excitants" of feeling. "They are calculated also to arouse feeling," he says, "and so to stimulate action."¹ This, then, is the basis for his emotive theory of values.

Section 3

Before elaborating on this theory, Ayer is concerned to get rid of the only types of theories of moral philosophy which could possibly be considered as worthy to be rivals. To begin with, there are those theories which would reduce "the whole sphere of ethical terms to non-ethical terms." The question he faces is: can "statements of ethical value...be translated into statements of empirical fact"? Among moral philosophers who would respond in the affirmative are those, he suggests, who have been termed "subjectivists", and "utilitarians".

"For the utilitarian defines the rightness of actions, and the goodness of ends, in terms of the pleasure, or happiness, or satisfaction, to which they give rise; the subjectivist, in terms of the feelings of approval which a certain person, or group of people, has towards them. Each of these types of definition makes moral judgments into a sub-class of psychological or sociological judgments...."²

One would suppose that if any theory of this nature could be upheld it would be appealing to a radical empiricist, and, indeed, Ayer allows that the possibility is "very attractive" to him. The reason is obvious.

"For, if either (theory) was correct", he writes, "it would follow that ethical assertions were not generically different from the factual assertions which are ordinarily contrasted with them; and the account which we have already given of empirical hypotheses would apply to them also."³

Any moral philosopher prescribing such a possibility, however, would have to face a considerable body of philosophic arguments to the

¹LTL, pp. 108-110.

²LTL, p. 104.

³Ibid.

contrary. Hume, we remember, was concerned to argue against the logic of theories which began in terms of 'is' statements, and, in some manner, concluded with 'ought' statements. Defenders of 'the a priori' in any form would similarly argue that there can be no translation of ethical statements to non-ethical statements, or vice versa. Kant, for example, thought it was "a matter of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy completely cleansed of everything that can only be empirical and appropriate to anthropology."¹ And in 1903, G.E. Moore, in his Principia Ethica, introduced to philosophy the phrase "the naturalistic fallacy"² to apply to theories which, in effect, tried to define the word "good" in non-ethical terms. He said, indeed, that "good" is indefinable in any terms.

Ayer, in turn, rejects any attempt to postulate a 'naturalistic' theory, and in stating his grounds he relies on an analysis of the conventions of language. First he considers a form of what he calls the "subjectivist view" in which "to call an action right or a thing good, is to say that it is generally approved of." Now within the conventions of our language we "assert that some actions which are generally approved of are not right, or that some things which are generally approved of are not good"; and in making such assertions we allow that we are not being self-contradictory. Within our conventional usage of language, then, we imply that there can be no translation of the terms "right" or "good" into the phrase "generally approved of". The same kind of argument is used against what Ayer terms "the alternative subjectivist view that a man who asserts that a certain action is right, or that a certain thing is good, is saying that he himself approves of it." And his ground for

¹Kant, Groundwork (Paton), p. 57.

²G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 10.

rejecting this view is that "a man who confessed that he sometimes approved of what was bad or wrong would not be contradicting himself." A similar argument, he says, "is fatal to utilitarianism". That is to say, there would be nothing self-contradictory about the assertion that "it is sometimes wrong to perform the action which would actually or probably cause the greatest happiness, or the greatest balance of pleasure over pain, or of satisfied over unsatisfied desire". This kind of argument, as Mary Warnock points out,¹ is different from G.E. Moore's treatment of 'the naturalistic fallacy'. Moore's point, as Mrs. Warnock puts it, is that supposing one asserts that the word "good" may be defined in terms of something else, say 'pleasure', one can always intelligibly ask, "Is pleasure good?" The implication, as for Ayer's analysis, is that the terms are not equivalent.

In outlining Ayer's rejection of 'naturalistic' theories, I have stressed that his argument is dependent upon his interpretation of conventions of our language. The implication is that if linguistic conventions were different his argument would be different. Ayer recognizes this dependence in the following passage:

"...we are not, of course, denying that it is possible to invent a language in which all ethical symbols are definable in non-ethical terms, or even that it is desirable to invent such a language and adopt it in place of our own; what we are denying is that the suggested reduction of ethical to non-ethical statements is consistent with the conventions of our language. That is, we reject utilitarianism and subjectivism, not as proposals to replace our existing ethical notions by new ones, but as analyses of our existing ethical notions. Our contention is simply that, in our language, sentences which contain normative ethical symbols are not equivalent to sentences which express psychological propositions, or indeed empirical propositions of any kind."²

To argue in this manner, with the emphasis on the conventions of our

¹Mary Warnock, Ethics Since 1900, p. 87.
²LTL, p. 105.

language, rather than usage or purposes, is now generally recognized, at least among philosophical analysts, to be a questionable procedure; and, as we shall see more clearly later, Ayer would now be among the first to admit it. The problem, as he acknowledges later, is that "very often...the old, the socially correct, way of speaking is logically misleading."¹ It could be argued, for example, that it was probably through a reliance on the subject-predicate linguistic conventions of our language that 'objectivists' were led to postulate non-natural predicates or qualities for people and actions designated as 'good'. In view of such a consideration, Ayer now admits that, far from adhering to a 'conventional' use of language in the initial expression of his theory, he was in effect recommending a new convention---that he was, in other words, unconventional. While he would thus have to restate his theory (in the manner which I shall later indicate), the main point of his argument against 'naturalistic' theories need not be lost---even though it is now without support. His point, that is, is that "sentences which contain normative ethical symbols are not equivalent to sentences which express psychological propositions, or indeed empirical propositions of any kind." With more emphasis on the 'use' or 'purpose' of ethical language, rather than on linguistic conventions, this point may be more readily made; although, as will be apparent in this and subsequent chapters, not without some difficulty.

After rejecting 'naturalistic' theories, Ayer must face one other traditional type of ethical theory which, if acceptable, would, as he says, "undermine the whole of (his)...main argument." He introduces the question in the following manner:

"In admitting that normative ethical concepts are irreducible

¹Ayer, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements", in Philosophical Essays, p. 232.

to empirical concepts, we seem to be leaving the way clear for the 'absolutist' view of ethics---that is, the view that statements of value are not controlled by observation, as ordinary empirical propositions are, but only by a mysterious 'intellectual intuition'.¹

Since the key phrase here is "intellectual intuition", and since this would include a wider group of theories than does the word "absolutist" (which tends to be used to refer primarily to Hegelians and neo-Hegelians such as Bradley and Bosanquet) I shall use the word "intuitionist" in this context. This has the merit of including G.E. Moore who would seem inappropriately classified as an 'absolutist'. The crux of the problem for Ayer is that in this main rival theory, ethical 'statements', although empirically unverifiable, are nevertheless held to be 'genuine synthetic propositions'. If such a theory is acceptable, then his radical empiricist theory of knowledge is unacceptable.

In Language, Truth, and Logic he does not clash 'head-on' with intuitionism, but rather fights a 'running battle'. Allowing that an acceptance of intuitionism will undermine his radical empiricism, he says that he will "meet the difficulty by showing that the correct treatment of ethical statements is afforded" by his emotive analysis, "which is wholly compatible with (his)...radical empiricism."² Before beginning to expound his own analysis, however, he pauses briefly to point out a feature of intuitionism "which is seldom recognized by its advocates", and this feature is "that it makes statements of value unverifiable". It is necessary for Ayer to establish this point, thereby putting intuitionism on the same footing with his own theory before he proceeds to develop his analysis. He does this in the following manner:

"...it is notorious that what seems intuitively certain to one

¹LTL, p. 106.

²LTL, p. 106.

person may seem doubtful, or even false, to another. So that unless it is possible to provide some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions, a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition's validity. But in the case of moral judgments, no such criterion can be given. Some moralists claim to settle the matter by saying that they 'know' that their own moral judgments are correct. But such an assertion is of purely psychological interest, and has not the slightest tendency to prove the validity of any moral judgment. For dissentient moralists may equally well 'know' that their ethical views are correct. And, as far as subjective certainty goes, there will be nothing to choose between them."¹

Ayer's point can hardly be reasonably denied.

Intuitionism is a serious contender, nevertheless, as is apparent from the fact that in his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements", he considers it directly, devoting more space to it than he does in Language, Truth, and Logic. Of incidental value in considering his later treatment of intuitionism is that by the very contrast one gains a clearer conception of Ayer's emotive analysis. Among intuitionists possibly the one most deserving of attention is G.E. Moore (it is perhaps significant that in the paper I have mentioned, Ayer cites only Moore as an example of intuitionist philosophers). There is of course a fundamental difference between the theories of Ayer and Moore, for, although Moore was an analytic philosopher he was no philosophical analyst (at least in the sense in which that term is now most often used). I should like, briefly, then to consider Moore's account of ethical concepts, in so far as it is relevant to a consideration of Ayer's position.

The fundamental difference between the analyses of the two may be pointed up by asking what they proceed to say about ethical terms and statements after they have rejected 'naturalistic' theories. In Moore's

¹Ibid.

case, after saying that the word "good" is indefinable, he nevertheless uses what appears to be what might be termed "objectivist" language, as if there should be an objective property which mysteriously remains hidden from us. There are many examples of such language throughout Principia Ethica and the following passage is typical:

"The peculiarity of Ethics is not that it investigates assertions about human conduct, but that it investigates assertions about that property of things which is denoted by the term 'good', and the converse property denoted by the term 'bad'."¹

Elsewhere he says that it is an "erroneous" doctrine to assume "that 'good' must denote some real property of things";² but, as I understand him, his point is that there are logical difficulties with any theory which, in attempting to define 'good', asserts that there is an equivalence between the word "good" and any specific hypostatic 'entity' or 'property' (metaphysical as well as physical or natural) which might be specifically denoted by the use of any specific word. Despite this qualification, however, and despite Moore's repeated assertions that the word "good" is not definable, the logic of his language, as I have previously suggested, is of the kind that assumes that there is some objective 'property of things', or an 'ultimate, unanalysable predicate'. Perhaps this kind of language is nowhere more evident than in the first of the two guiding questions which he regards as fundamental throughout Principia Ethica. The question, as expressed in the second paragraph of the Preface, is, "What kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?"³ And it is apparent as he proceeds that this question is not asked simply for the sake of clarifying it, for, in the final chapter, appropriately entitled,

¹Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 36.

²Op.cit., p. 140.

³The second question, "What kind of actions ought we to perform?", is, for Moore, subordinate to the first; since an answer to the first entails an answer to the second.

"The Ideal", he returns to it. The "main object" of the final chapter, he writes, "is to arrive at some positive answer to the fundamental question of Ethics---the question: 'What things are goods or ends in themselves?'"¹ And far from being agnostic, he undertakes to indicate these "great intrinsic goods". If one asks the obvious question; "what is the nature of the evidence" for his assertions about such 'goods', he maintains that "no relevant evidence whatever can be adduced: from no other truth, except themselves alone, can it be inferred that they are either true or false."² Such 'goods', for Moore, are simply recognized as being intrinsically good. Although he is agnostic "as to the manner or origin of our cognition"³ of these 'goods', he nevertheless uses language which implies that ethical statements are genuine synthetic propositions. Thus Ayer must reject his theory.

Ayer's concern, after his rejection of 'naturalistic' theories, is vastly different from Moore's. To begin with, as we would expect, he would have to say that Moore has not differentiated between the role of the moralist and the moral philosopher. Even to entertain the question "What things are goods or ends in themselves?", as if it could be appropriately answered by the moral philosopher qua moral philosopher, is to go beyond the role of the logical analyst of the language of morals. Ayer of course puts this more strongly. "A strictly philosophical treatise on ethics," he writes, "should...make no ethical pronouncements."⁴

A related and more significant difference between the two is that Ayer would say that the use of ethical terms as if they referred to any objective property is to misunderstand the conventions of our use of ethical language. To paraphrase what he says,⁵ keeping in mind later

¹Op.cit., p. 184.

²Op.cit., p. viii.

³Principia Ethica, p.x.

⁴LTL., p. 103.

⁵LTL., p. 108.

modifications, we must not cite as our reason for saying that there is no criterion for ethical statements the belief that ethical statements have a criterion which is mysteriously independent of sense-experience: it is rather that ethical statements are inappropriately used when they seem to imply such a criterion. To point up this difference in the use of language we might say that, in Moore's use, it would be appropriate to say of an ethical statement that it might be considered in terms of the categories of truth or falsehood---that it is, as I have previously said, a synthetic proposition.¹ One might say that while Moore is not a 'naturalist' in moral philosophy, he is misled nevertheless in taking as a model for all language the 'naturalistic' language which legitimately applies to empirical science. Ayer, on the other hand, in speaking of his own analysis, says that the use of the categories of truth and falsehood, or probable truth and probable falsehood, does not make for clarity. It is more appropriate, that is, to say that "moral judgments are emotive rather than descriptive, that they are persuasive expressions of attitudes and not statements of fact...."² (I shall return to this view shortly). Thus it is that he would reject not only 'naturalistic' theories, such as traditional or orthodox 'subjectivism' and 'utilitarianism', but also any theory, such as Moore's, which misunderstands the uses of ethical language.

In his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements", Ayer restates the case against intuitionism (as well as against moral sense theories) in a slightly different form.³ I say "restates", since the argument is basically the same in that it charges the intuitionist with failing to distinguish between the 'normative' and 'descriptive' uses of language---which is, in effect, the same distinction we have seen between 'ethical'

¹Cf. Principia Ethica, p. 7.

²Philosophical Essays, p. 246.

³Ibid., p. 239f.

and 'naturalistic' uses of language.

One supposes that Ayer must have been challenged to demonstrate that the experience which intuitionists claim to have when they make ethical 'judgments' is not an 'intellectual intuition' of ethical, non-natural properties. If Ayer fails to have the same kind of experience which the intuitionist claims to have, the charge is that perhaps this is simply a shortcoming. But to argue about one's introspective experiences in this way, Ayer maintains, is not relevant to his argument. For all he knows, the only difference between his experience and the experience of the intuitionist is in their respective manners of describing their experiences. The central point is that anyone who claims to 'intuit' or 'sense' something which he 'describes' or 'denotes' as "goodness" or "beauty" or "fittingness" or "worthiness to be approved", is, in that experience, engaged in an experience which is more appropriately termed "descriptive" rather than "normative". "The word 'good', or whatever other value term may be used," he says, "simply comes to be descriptive of experiences of this type...." In that sense the word "good" is used in much the same way as we would use the word "friendly" when we say that a man has a friendly face. But to say that a situation has the property which we come to describe as "goodness", a "property whose presence is established by people's having such experiences, does not entail that it is preferable to other situations, or that it is anyone's duty to bring it into existence." Ayer then proceeds to write the following key passage: "To say that such a situation ought to be created, or that it deserves to exist, will be to say something different from merely saying that it has this property." In the experience of allegedly 'intuiting' the 'property' of 'goodness', the intuitionist is, then, using the word "good" to

'describe' or 'denote'. If he believes that he is doing something more than using the word in a 'descriptive' sense, it is because he tacitly understands that the word "good" is also used in a 'normative' sense. As Ayer expresses it, "This point is obscured by the use of an ethical term to describe the property, just because the ethical term is tacitly understood to be normative."

"But if the ethical term is understood to be normative," he continues, "then it does not merely describe the alleged non-natural property, and if it does merely describe this property, then it is not normative and so no longer does the work that ethical terms are supposed to do."¹

This argument, then, like the previous one, rests on the charge that the intuitionist is confused in his understanding of the uses of language. For all we know, he might indeed be having what he terms "intellectual intuitions" of 'properties' of a situation. But in using terms such as "goodness" or "beauty" to refer to such alleged 'properties', he is using terms which are more appropriately used in normative and not descriptive situations. He is in effect trying to set up a convention for the use of ethical language which is misleading. Ayer expresses this point rather strongly:

"...it is misleading for him (the intuitionist and moral sense theorist) to use a value-term to designate the content of such (descriptive) experiences; for in this way he contrives to smuggle a normative judgment into what purports to be a statement of fact. A valuation is not a description of something very peculiar; it is not a description at all."²

We shall return to a consequence of this argument later, when it is more relevant to discuss what Ayer refers to in this context as "the familiar subjective-objective antithesis" in moral philosophy. In postulating his own analysis Ayer will be concerned to provide what he regards as a

¹Ibid., p. 240.

²Ibid., p. 242.

better understanding of the appropriate uses of, respectively, normative and descriptive terms, an analysis which will more accurately accord with our usage of language, in addition to being consistent with his radical empiricist epistemology.

Section 4

The general form of Ayer's argument, like the form of Hume's treatment of moral philosophy, has a 'negative' and a 'positive' aspect. So far, I have been concerned primarily with the 'negative' aspect, in which he aims to dispose of earlier theories which might be considered as rivals, before he undertakes to postulate the 'positive' aspect of his own theory---that is, his own emotivist analysis of ethical statements. There are, however, two general aspects to the 'positive' part of his moral philosophy. First, there is the aspect which suggests that the reason why it is logically misleading to suppose that ethical statements may be used in the same way as 'factual' statements or propositions is that they are "mere pseudo-concepts". The second aspect, which I shall consider later, is concerned to show precisely in what way ethical 'statements' are used, and this leads us to the heart of his 'emotive' analysis.

As we have seen, in postulating his radical empiricist epistemology, Ayer ("like Hume", he wrote) had accepted that there were two classes of genuine propositions, the analytic propositions of logic and mathematics, and the empirical propositions which concern matters of fact. This, we recall, left no room for so-called ethical propositions among 'genuine propositions'. Thus, as he says, his theory of values begins with the premiss that "the fundamental ethical concepts are unanalysable, inasmuch as there is no criterion by which we can test the validity of the

judgments in which they occur."¹ To this point, he says, he is in agreement with the absolutists (or, as I have termed them, "intuitionists"). But whereas the intuitionist is unable to explain why ethical concepts are unanalysable, Ayer believes that he has an explanation. The reason, he asserts, is that "they are mere pseudo-concepts." "The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition", he continues, "adds nothing to its factual content." (As we shall see, Ayer is later compelled to modify his manner of expressing this; however, he does not essentially alter the point he is making in this passage.) Here, again, Ayer is reminiscent of Hume, for, as we will recall, Hume made much the same point when he said that it is impossible that our moral distinctions "can be pronounced either true or false,"² and, that "immorality is no particular fact which can be the object of the understanding."³ But Ayer takes Hume's point further, however, to a conclusion entailed by his manner of stating his epistemological premisses, when he says that in ethics or morality there can be no propositions (using the word "propositions" in the sense in which it means that which asserts something which can be said to be true or false).

Whether ethics can do without propositions was, inevitably, a controversial question, and Ayer has had to restate his case to make his point clear. He does this, in part, in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, where, in the section entitled, "The Principle of Verification", he stipulates how he intends to use the words "proposition" and "statement". He recognizes that he will be using the familiar word "statement" in a "slightly unfamiliar sense", and thereupon writes the following passage:

¹ LTL, p. 107.

² Above, Ch. I, p. 39.

³ Above, Ch. I, p. 48.

"...I propose that any form of words that is grammatically significant shall be held to constitute a sentence, and that every indicative sentence, whether it is literally meaningful or not, shall be regarded as expressing a statement. Furthermore, any two sentences which are mutually translatable will be said to express the same statement. The word 'proposition', on the other hand, will be reserved for what is expressed by sentences which are literally meaningful. Thus, the class of propositions becomes, in this usage, a sub-class of the class of statements, and one way of describing the use of the principle of verification would be to say that it provided a means of determining when an indicative sentence expressed a proposition, or, in other words, of distinguishing statements that belonged to the class of propositions from those that did not."

If one then adopts this 'verbal convention', as well as the Humean radical empiricism, one must say, as Ayer does in Language, Truth, and Logic, that ethical (and metaphysical) 'statements' are not 'propositions' since they do not express anything that is 'literally meaningful'; or, to put it in another way, and perhaps more provocatively, ethical (and metaphysical) statements are literally meaningless.

He has more to say about this distinction in his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements"; although, in this paper, as I have mentioned, he modifies his earlier views about the meaninglessness of ethical sentences. From the very first paragraph it appears that the doctrines of the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein can no longer be ignored. This is not to suggest, however, that Ayer endorses them. After suggesting that what we might call the positivism of the mid-twenties had perhaps been over-stated, Ayer writes as follows:

"Theological and ethical statements are no longer stigmatized as false or meaningless. They are merely said to be different from scientific statements. They are differently related to their evidence; or rather, a different meaning is attached to 'evidence' in their case. 'Every kind of statement', we are told, 'has its own kind of logic.'"

While making some concessions to this new theory he is obviously not prepared to go as far as some of its proponents would wish. In the

second paragraph, after allowing that "it may very well be true" that "ethical statements are sui generis", he says that he still wishes to hold his earlier view---allowing, however, that it was stated in what appeared to be an unconventional form of expression. The question is whether he could still postulate his type of emotivist theory if he accepted some of the main doctrines of the later-Wittgenstein. As we shall see, Hare and Nowell-Smith, among other philosophical analysts, wish to maintain that the word "emotivism" is too restrictive and even misleading for the purpose of indicating the uses of ethical sentences. In any event, Ayer allows in his paper that obviously he had not followed the 'conventions of language' in a manner to avoid misunderstanding, and his intention now is to explain his linguistic conventions in a way that may be more clearly understood. As he says later, "the only relevant consideration is that of clarity."

In view of this concern for conventions of language, and in view of his attention to the way in which he wishes us to understand his uses of the words "proposition" and "statement", there is a curious and unexplained shift in his manner of using the word "statement" in his paper. While this is not directly relevant to his central thesis, it has to be noted if we accept his point, as indeed we must, that clarity is a relevant consideration. The different use of the word "statement" is apparent the second time it appears in the following passage (from the second paragraph of the paper). This passage, as will be apparent, also raises another important issue concerning conventions of language:

"Certainly the view, which I still wish to hold, that what are called ethical statements are not really statements at all, that they are not descriptive of anything, that they cannot be either true or false, is in an obvious sense incorrect. For, as the English language is currently used--and what else, it may be asked, is here in question?--it is by no means improper to refer

to ethical utterances as statements..."¹

The question, I had thought, was not whether ethical utterances are 'statements', if by the word "statements" we mean, "every indicative sentence, whether it is literally meaningful or not"; but it was whether an ethical utterance could be a 'proposition', if by the word "proposition" we mean "sentences which are literally meaningful"---that is, sentences which are able to pass the test of his principle of verification. Thus, in the above quotation, instead of using the word "statements" which I have underlined, one would have expected him to use the word "propositions"; but if we do this, in what way are we to regard the use of the word "statements" in the phrase, "it is by no means improper to refer to ethical utterances as statements..."?

As we follow his explanation, we see that, in this context, for the sake of clarification of his views, he is using another, more socially acceptable convention for the use of the word "statement"; although, as he will go on to say, this convention is logically misleading.

"When (by means of a statement) someone characterizes an action by the use of an ethical predicate, it is quite good usage to say that he is thereby describing it; when someone wishes to assent to an ethical verdict, it is perfectly legitimate for him to say that it is true, or that it is a fact, just as, if he wished to dissent from it, it would be perfectly legitimate for him to say that it was false. We should know what he meant and we should not consider that he was using words in an unconventional way. What is unconventional, rather, is the usage of the philosopher who tells us that ethical statements are not really statements at all but something else, ejaculations perhaps, or commands, and that they cannot be either true or false."²

Ayer's 'unconventional' quarrel with the 'conventional' usage of the words "statement", "describing", "true", "false", and "fact", has a purpose. When a philosopher defies such conventions, (as Ayer himself had done in

¹Ibid., p. 231. (My underlining).

²Ibid., p. 232.

Language, Truth, and Logic), he does this, as he says, to bring out "certain points more clearly". When one does this, he concedes, "very often what he is doing, although he may not know it, is to recommend a new way of speaking, not just for amusement, but because he thinks that the old, the socially correct, way of speaking, is logically misleading...." The 'old' way of speaking, that is, is liable to lead one to suppose that ethical statements may be analysed in the same manner as empirical probability statements.

"But", he continues, "when one considers how these ethical statements are actually used, it may be found that they function so very differently from other types of statement that it is advisable to put them into a separate category altogether; either to say that they are not to be counted as statements at all, or, if this proves inconvenient, at least to say that they do not express propositions, and consequently that there are no ethical facts. This does not mean that all ethical statements are held to be false. It is merely a matter of laying down a usage of the words 'proposition' and 'fact', according to which only propositions express facts and ethical statements fall outside the class of propositions."²

Thus Ayer returns to the view which he "still wishes to hold", that ethical statements, whatever they are, are not like probability statements, or analytic propositions; and thus they cannot be 'genuine propositions', in the sense in which he stipulates his usage of these words. The main difference is that in his later work he clearly acknowledges that he is being 'unconventional' in his use of these words, and that he is recommending a new convention, one that would not be, as he says, logically misleading.

This is of course in contrast with his arguments against the 'naturalistic' theories of subjectivism and utilitarianism in which he relied entirely on the 'conventional' usage of language to maintain that such theories were self-contradictory.² In any event, Ayer restates his

¹Ibid., p. 232.

²Above, pp. 73-74.

case against 'naturalistic' theories in his paper; although, as I shall argue, this argument similarly is inadequate. His challenge is that "there is nothing that counts as observing the designata of...ethical predicates, apart from observing the natural features of the situation." From this he argues that there is no factual or scientific dependence between the natural features of a situation and the observer's use of ethical statements. He proceeds then to argue upon the basis of an hypothetical example of two 'observers' who study a murder case.

"Let us assume," he writes, "that two observers agree about all the circumstances of the case, including the agent's motives, but that they disagree in their evaluation of it."¹

While he allows that in some way the observers' respective uses of ethical statements are dependent on the natural features, he insists that such dependence is not scientific. If it were scientific, then we would have to say that the designata of the ethical 'predicates' were in some manner apart from the situation observed, "something independently verifiable, for which the facts adduced as the reasons for the moral judgment were evidence." But, in the case of the two observers who disagree only in respect of their evaluations, the facts able to be adduced are coincident, and "there is no procedure of examining the value of the facts, as distinct from the facts themselves." Now this argument is also based on Humean empiricism. That is to say, the challenge, to one who would disagree, to point to 'designata' for ethical predicates, is strikingly reminiscent of the approach we have noted in Hume, especially, for example, in his statements suggesting that "beauty is not a quality of the circle", and, by analogy, that "crime or immorality is no particular fact or relation, which can be the object of the understanding...."²

¹Philosophical Essays, p. 236.

²Above, Ch.I, p. 48.

This, however, is an argument which invites an argumentum ad hominem challenge since it presupposes a 'meaning in terms only of a referent' theory of meaning. The naturalist might well ask, in return, "Show me the designata of non-value predicates such as 'active', 'intelligent', and, for that matter, 'emotive'." Such predicates are used in a 'dispositional' sense (accepting Ryle's distinction), and it would be a category-mistake to demand that 'designata' should be pointed out, in the same sense in which Ayer is demanding 'designata' for ethical predicates. These non-value predicates are nevertheless useful and indispensable words in our 'descriptive' terminology, and while they are not so easy to 'learn' as, for example, colour predicates such as "red" and "yellow", we may learn to use them with reference to the 'behaviour' of creatures and objects. Similarly, the naturalist might wish to argue that Ayer is inviting a category-mistake when he asks that designata be indicated for ethical predicates. The naturalist might suggest that words such as "good" and "right" are more like dispositional predicates in their 'logical behaviour'. He would not of course carry the analogy too far; but, in carrying it even this far he would have countered Ayer's argument. Ayer, it appears, is unwilling to give up the assumption that the 'verification principle' should be the main criterion for the 'logical behaviour' of all sentences and terms; and, as I have suggested earlier, he appears not to give whole-hearted support to the view that 'every kind of statement has its own kind of logic'. Stevenson and Hare, on the other hand, specifically say that the 'verificationist' view, although useful for some purposes, is inappropriately used when applied to value judgments. If, then, an argument is to be made against 'naturalism' it would have to be made in another way.

In any event, despite minor modifications to the way in which he expresses his views, Ayer persists in his fundamental point that it is logically misleading to suppose that ethical statements may be used in the same way as 'factual' statements. To see his point more clearly we might consider his example of the murder case in more detail. For one who studies the case there will be a mass of information about court details ("where and when and how the killing was effected; the identity of the murderer and the victim; the relationship in which they stood to one another"); and then there will be questions about motives ---whether it was jealousy, starvation, revenge, etc.; and in seeking information about motives the 'observer' will acquire data which will include moral judgments made by the murderer. But such data, from the point of view of the person who studies the case, is 'factual' information: for example, is it or is it not a fact that the murderer believed that he had a moral right to kill? But then Ayer asks in what sense the situation differs if the person who studies the murder 'applies an ethical predicate to it'.

"Suppose that instead of asking what it was that really happened, or what the agent's motives really were, we ask whether he was justified in acting as he did. Did he have the right to kill? Is it true that he had the right? Is it a fact that he acted rightly?"¹

In the three questions at the end of this quotation Ayer has (obviously deliberately) used 'ordinary conventions' of our language which, as he has said, could be logically misleading. Such questions might lead us to suppose, that is, that ethical statements are in fact used in the same way and for the same purpose as 'factual' statements--- that we might be led to speaking in terms of ethical 'properties' and

¹Philosophical Essays, p. 235.

'characteristics', and might suppose that there is some 'objective' criterion to decide between conflicting statements. But Ayer asks us not to be misled. The moral philosopher qua moral philosopher must not be concerned with "whether a certain action is right or wrong, but what is implied in saying that it is right, or saying that it is wrong."

"Suppose then", he continues, "that we say that the man acted rightly. The point that I wish to make is that in saying this we are not elaborating or modifying our description in the way that we should be elaborating it if we gave further police-court details, or in the way that we should be modifying it if we showed that the agent's motives were different from what they had been thought to be. To say that his motives were good, or that they were bad, is not to say what they were. To say that the man acted rightly, or that he acted wrongly, is not to say what he did. And when one has said what he did, when one has described the situation in the way that I have outlined, then to add that he was justified, or alternatively that he was not, is not to say any more about what he did; it does not add a further detail to the story. It is for this reason that these ethical predicates are not factual; they do not describe any features of the situation to which they are applied."¹

Thus Ayer returns to the same position he had postulated in Language, Truth, and Logic, where he said, as we have seen, that "the presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content."²

Section 5

To this point we have been concerned, first, with Ayer's rejection of 'naturalistic' and 'intuitionist' analyses of ethical statements, and, secondly, with his case to maintain that whatever ethical statements are, it is logically misleading to say that they are used in the same way as factual statements or propositions. The next, and perhaps most controversial question, is to ask precisely in what way ethical statements are used. This question takes us to the heart of his 'emotive' analysis. In treating this I shall look first at what might be said to be the

¹Ibid.

²Above, p. 84.

'classic' statement of the 'emotive theory of values' ---the theory which Ayer expounds in the first edition of Language, Truth, and Logic. Then I shall consider modifications which he makes to his statement of the theory in his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements". Finally, I shall consider some objections which have been made against the theory.

After saying that "the presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content", Ayer elaborates on this point in the following passage:

"Thus, if I say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money', I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, 'You stole that money'. In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, 'You stole that money,' in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker."¹

Ayer proceeds to sharpen up this point by generalising the statement, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," to the more general statement, "Stealing money is wrong." Now if an ethical symbol adds nothing to the factual content of a statement, then this latter statement, "Stealing money is wrong," has no factual meaning: it "expresses no proposition which can be either true or false." It is as if one "had written, 'Stealing money!!!'--- where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is being expressed." If, in such a statement, I am not asserting a proposition which may be said to be either true or false, I cannot, strictly speaking, be contradicted by a person who says, "Stealing money is right". Such a person is merely expressing his own

¹LTL, p. 107. (My underlining).

moral sentiments, which do not happen to be the same as my own. Of course in view of Ayer's rejection of 'naturalistic' theories he must emphasize that in saying, "Stealing money is wrong", I am not even making a factual statement about my own 'state of mind'. As he expresses this, "I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments", or, to put it another way, "I should simply be evincing my feelings, which is not the same thing as saying that I have them." Thus, in emphasizing the point that ethical statements are not like 'factual' statements, he says that "there is plainly no sense in asking which of us is right. For," he continues, "neither of us is asserting a genuine proposition." Taking his generalization further, Ayer goes on to say that what he has said about the symbol "wrong", "applies to all normative ethical symbols." Such symbols are not restricted only to sentences which we would ordinarily term ethical statements, for they may also appear in sentences which "record ordinary empirical facts besides expressing ethical feeling about those facts." But wherever they occur, "in every case in which one would commonly be said to be making an ethical judgment, the function of the relevant ethical word is purely 'emotive'."

As I have mentioned earlier,¹ the view that ethical sentences may not be said to be contradictory is one which has invited much criticism. Ayer's argument appears to be based on two main assumptions, both of which are able to be challenged. First, underlying the whole argument, is the assumption that the 'verificationist' theory of meaning is the one-and-only possible theory of meaning. Secondly, he assumes that single words and statements may have only one purpose or use at one time. With these assumptions one would be compelled to express views which seem paradoxical to say the least. He could not say, for

¹Above, p. 70.

example, that a value judgment could be said to 'describe' or 'declare' feelings, for (unless one said that it could also serve another purpose) he would appear to be led to the suggestion that the sentence "stealing is wrong" is equivalent in meaning to the factual sentence "I have feelings of disapproval for stealing". Thus, in trying to avoid the 'naturalist' he had to offer the unconvincing argument that 'evincing' is in no sense a declaration of the fact that one has feelings of approval or disapproval. And if one assumes a 'meaning in terms only of a referent' theory of meaning, such as is the verificationist theory, and if he wished to maintain that ethical sentences may be said to be contradictory, then, if he rejects 'naturalism', he is faced with the alternative offered by the 'non-naturalist objectivist'. Ayer thus had no other outlet but the tough-minded radical subjectivist view that ethical sentences cannot be contradictory.

Since this view is so obviously 'unconventional' one is inevitably led to questioning the assumptions. As I shall indicate shortly, Ayer, in his later work, does modify his views about the 'evincing' of feelings or attitudes, and he will allow that ethical statements may be said to be contradictory in that they express contradictory attitudes. He does not essentially modify his views, however, about what might be termed, with great caution, the 'objective' reference of value judgments: even in his modified view, that is, value judgments are not held to 'describe' in any way the persons or actions judged. That he had not modified his views on this point would seem to be because he was not prepared to accept the later-Wittgenstein doctrine that words may have more than one use at one and the same time. If he had accepted this doctrine he might have been able to suggest, as Stevenson and Hare do, that there is a

further sense in which value judgments may be said to be contradictory. Another way of escaping his paradox is to consider the possibility that there may be more than one theory of meaning ---specifically the theory that the meaning of a word is indicated by its use. While he considers this (in acknowledging the dictum that 'every statement has its own logic'), he does not completely break away from his assumption that the 'verificationist' theory is fundamental. (I shall again return to this point after we have seen later modifications to his emotivist analysis).

There is also another aspect of this early expression of his theory which has been challenged; and this is the view that the purpose served by moral judgments is to evince and evoke feelings. To begin with, the word "feeling" too readily lends itself to misunderstanding. As Ryle points out in his chapter, "Emotion", in The Concept of Mind, the word "emotion" (which Ayer uses synonymously with "feeling",¹ and sometimes with "attitude") is an ambiguous word. In one sense -- the sense in which Ryle stipulates that the word "feelings" is most appropriately used -- it may mean 'occurrences', such as "thrills, twinges, pangs, throbs, wrenches, itches", and so on. In another sense, however, it may be used to classify the "motives by which people's higher-level behaviour is explained"; and in this sense we use words such as "vanity, kindness, avarice, patriotism, and laziness" to indicate the way in which a person is disposed to behave. This, according to Ryle, is a "dispositional use of motive words". Now Ayer does not make this distinction in his use of the word "feelings", and it is obvious that he uses it in both senses, depending on the context. When he says, for example, that ethical terms are calculated to "arouse" or "evince" feelings, he is using the word in an 'active' or 'occurrence'

¹LTL, bottom of p. 113.

sense; whereas when he speaks about ethical argument designed to get another person "to adopt the same moral attitude...as we do"¹, he is obviously thinking in terms of a 'dispositional' use of "attitude", which is his synonym for "feeling". For the most part, however, the key word in his analysis is used in an 'active' or 'occurrence' sense; and this is unfortunate. A major difficulty with this primitive form of the emotivist theory is, as we have seen when considering Hume's theory, it cannot adequately explain moral judgments about actions which have taken place in the past, as well as those which occur at remote distances from us. While I would judge that the action of Brutus was as morally wrong as any similar action taking place before me now, my 'feelings' (in the 'Occurrence' sense) obviously are not the basis for my judgment. A further difficulty with such an analysis would be that it could not adequately account for the relative stability of moral judgments about certain types of actions or situations; and it might seem to suggest that moral argument is a willy-nilly, hit-or-miss activity--- if you happen to hit upon the right stimulus you will get the desired response. But of course, whatever moral argument is precisely, it is not this kind of activity. The basic problem, as Ryle points out, is that introspection is a hazardous undertaking at best, and, as he writes, "no one could ever know or even, usually reasonably conjecture that the cause of someone else's overt action was the occurrence in him of a feeling."² An analysis more in accord with moral argument would, then, be one expressed primarily in behaviouristic terms. Instead of using the misleading word "feelings", especially in an 'occurrence' sense, one might use the word "attitude",

¹LTL, p. 111.

²The Concept of Mind, p. 90.

stipulating that it is used to suggest that moral judgments arise from the relatively consistent manner in which a person reacts to certain types of situations, and that these judgments are addressed to people who tend to react similarly. As I shall indicate, this is the position to which Ayer is led when he modifies his analysis. This modification would lead to a further problem for him, however, for one must ask what could be meant by saying that a moral judgment 'evinces' a 'disposition' or an 'attitude'. It is difficult to understand, for example, how a disposition to be 'honest' could be evinced without overt manifestations of behaviour which in some way indicate that a person has a tendency to behave in a certain way in certain types of situations. As we shall see, Ayer is led also to this point of view.

As I have mentioned, there is an important addendum to his 'emotivist' analysis. But before mentioning it I should like to refer to what I think is a minor objection to Ayer's use of the word "stealing" in his example to illustrate his theory. "It is worth noticing", wrote Professor A. D. Ritchie, "that the example is not quite fair because an ethical judgment is already implied in the word 'stole'."¹ Thus when Ayer removes the ethical predication, "is wrong", from the statement in his example, the remaining phrase, "stealing money", although not a complete statement, has, so to speak, ethical overtones; or, if we were to speak in terms of the usage of language, the word "stealing", in addition to having a descriptive use, also has an emotive use. But I cannot see that this criticism is ultimately fatal to an emotivist although it is undoubtedly cogent against Ayer's argument in this passage. An emotivist may accept the point of the criticism, however, and simply restate the analysis in

¹"Errors of Logical Positivism", in Essays in Philosophy, p. 79.
Cf., W. D. Ross, Foundations of Ethics, p. 34.

terms of it. The difficulty with Ayer's analysis is that, as I have indicated, he speaks of a relevant word or term as if it must be used either 'descriptively' or 'normatively', and as if it could not be used for both purposes at one and the same time. The tendency of moral philosophers to use highly abstract words such as "good", "bad", "right", and "wrong" would possibly lead one to suppose that ethical terms could have only one use. Ayer himself points to a way out of this tendency, however, when, in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, he mentions that "there may be a number of cases in which...(an) ethical term is itself to be understood descriptively."¹ Although he does not say so in this passage, he might also have said that there may be a number of cases in which a word which is normally used descriptively may also be used normatively. The word "stealing" is such a word. As we shall see in the next chapter, C. L. Stevenson contributed to the history of the analysis of ethical statements when he pointed out that single words may be used for different purposes. Nowell-Smith added to this point when he wrote the following passage:

"The commonest practical words do not have just one use. They have many uses and can be used to do more than one job on any given occasion."²

In this the influence of the teachings of the later Wittgenstein is of course apparent. As he was to express it, "the functions of words are as diverse as the functions" of any individual tool in a tool-box. A hammer, for example, has more uses than the obvious one of hammering nails.³ Thus, to return to Ayer's analysis, we might say that in every case in which one would commonly be said to be making an ethical judgment, the purpose for the use of the relevant word when considered in terms of

¹LTL, p. 21.

²Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 95.

³Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, pp. 6e & 12e.

its ethical use is purely emotive (while the purpose in its descriptive use is purely descriptive). It would be difficult, if not impossible, to translate the phrase "stealing money" to a phrase which would not be considered as divorced from its ethical use; but this is not essential to Ayer's point. All he would have to maintain is that the normative use of a term is different from its descriptive or other uses.

An important addendum to this expression of the 'emotive' theory of values is that Ayer says that "ethical terms do not serve only to express feeling. They are calculated also to arouse feeling and so to stimulate action." Carrying this suggestion somewhat further, Ayer proceeds to write the following passage:

"Indeed some of them are used in such a way as to give sentences in which they occur the effect of commands."

In writing this, Ayer is expressing a theory which Carnap had postulated about the use of ethical statements, to the exclusion of other uses. Ayer's initial expression of the 'emotive' theory, that is, had asserted primarily that in making an ethical statement one is 'expressing' or 'evincing' feelings or emotions, and then, he added that they may be used also as 'excitants' of feeling, calculated, that is, to "arouse feeling and stimulate action". Carnap concentrates on the latter use. He writes as follows:

"But actually a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form. It may have effects upon the actions of men, and these effects may either be in accordance with our wishes or not; but it is neither true nor false."¹

It is this kind of analysis of ethical statements which has led some writers to classify it, as Stephen Toulmin does, as "The Imperative Approach".² The merit of Ayer's approach over Carnap's is that he sees

¹Carnap, Philosophy and Logical Syntax, p. 24.
²Toulmin, Reason in Ethics, Ch. 4.

that ethical statements are not all exactly alike, and he suggests that there is, as it were, a shift in emphasis in ethical statements, ranging through three broad categories of statements, indicated by the respective ways in which we use the words, "duty", "ought", and "good".

"Thus the sentence, 'It is your duty to tell the truth' may be regarded both as the expression of a certain sort of ethical feeling about truthfulness and as the expression of the command 'Tell the truth'.

The sentence 'You ought to tell the truth' also involves the command 'Tell the truth', but here the tone of the command is less emphatic.

In the sentence 'It is good to tell the truth' the command has become little more than a suggestion."

"And thus", he goes on to say, "the 'meaning' of the word 'good', in its ethical usage, is differentiated from that of the word 'duty' or the word 'ought'. In fact we may define the meaning of the various ethical words in terms both of the different feelings they are ordinarily taken to express, and also the different responses which they are calculated to provoke."¹

This, then, is a summary statement of the 'emotive theory of values' as Ayer first expressed it. In his manner of expressing it, as we have seen, it has evoked obvious questions and criticism; and, as I have indicated, Ayer himself has seen fit to modify it ---to some extent in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, and to a greater extent in his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements". In his paper he goes so far as to allow the following concession:

"To say, as I once did, that...moral judgments are merely expressive of certain feelings, feelings of approval or disapproval, is an over-simplification."²

It seems beside the point, then, to consider further implications of, and objections to, the first expression of the theory; thus I shall look to the modified expression of the theory before considering possible implications and objections.

¹LTL, p. 108.

²Philosophical Essays, p. 238.

If his earlier analysis is an over-simplification, in what way (or ways) would he amend it? Ayer introduces us to this later expression of his emotivist analysis by considering how moral judgments would be used by the two hypothetical observers of the murder case. I shall outline what he has to say before commenting on it. The observers, we recall, are in agreement about all circumstances of the case, including the agent's motives, but they 'disagree' in their evaluation of it. Ayer allows that in some way the ethical evaluations they make are dependent on the 'natural features' of the situation; and this, I assume, is based on the empirical observation that evaluations change with changes in the data the observers acquire about natural features of the situation. But such dependence between data about the natural features, and the evaluations is not a logical dependence, for "ethical argument is not formal demonstration". Nor is it scientific, as we have seen in his rejection of naturalistic theories. Ayer strictly maintains 'Hume's gap'. Nevertheless, the observers give 'reasons' for their respective evaluations. What, then, are they doing?

"My own answer to this question," writes Ayer, "is that what are accounted reasons for our moral judgments are reasons only in the sense that they determine attitudes. One attempts to influence another person morally by calling his attention to certain natural features of the situation, which are such as will be likely to evoke from him the desired response."¹

This initial statement of a modified version of his theory of course applies primarily to the illustration of the two hypothetical observers who are trying to persuade each other about the 'rightness' of their respective evaluations. Ayer thus goes on to speak of other kinds of situations in which we make moral judgments.

¹Philosophical Essays, p. 238.

"...one may give reasons to oneself as a means of settling an attitude, or, more importantly, as a means of coming to some practical decision. Of course there are many cases in which one applies an ethical term without there being any question of one's having to act oneself, or even to persuade others to act, in any present situation. Moral judgments passed upon behaviour of historical or fictitious characters provide obvious examples."¹

This passage is to be remembered in view of some objections to his earlier analysis. Brand Blanshard, for example, considers that the earlier view is reduced to absurdity on the point, among others, that it does not adequately account for moral judgments about something that happened in the past, and some critics have said it does not give an adequate account of ethical disagreement. (As I shall later argue, most of Professor Blanshard's argument in his paper, "Subjectivism in Ethics ---A Criticism",² fails in its purpose.) At present I simply take note of the criticism.

Ayer next proceeds to emphasize a point which he had expressed without emphasis in Language, Truth, and Logic,³ and had seen fit to stress in the Introduction to his Second Edition.⁴

"But an action or a situation is morally evaluated always as an action or a situation of a certain kind. What is approved or disapproved is something repeatable. In saying that Brutus or Raskolnikov acted rightly, I am giving myself and others leave to imitate them should similar circumstances arise. I show myself to be favourably disposed in either case towards actions of that type. Similarly, in saying that they acted wrongly, I express a resolution not to imitate them, and endeavour also to discourage them."⁵

Now in trying to discourage others, I give 'reasons' why I think the action is wrong; and such argument, according to Ayer, "may take various forms". Assuming, for example, that some 'moral principles' (e.g. "that human life is sacred") have an influence upon those with whom I argue, I might try to establish that the principle applies to the situation in question.

¹Ibid.

²Blanshard, "Subjectivism in Ethics ---A Criticism", from The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, 1951.

³LT, p. 107 (bottom of page).

⁴LT, p. 21.

⁵Philosophical Essays, p. 237.

Or, if I assume that the utilitarian considerations will influence others, I "may try to establish certain facts, as, for example, that the action in question caused, or was such as would be likely to cause, a great deal of happiness." Such 'reasons' are given in support of a moral judgment which one wishes others to adopt.

"As for the moral judgment itself," he continues, "it may be regarded as expressing the attitude which the reasons given for it are calculated to evoke."¹

It is at this point that Ayer allows that his earlier analysis (that "moral judgments are merely expressive of certain feelings...of approval or disapproval") is an "over-simplification". Following this, he proceeds to say something further about his use of the word "attitude".

"The fact is rather that what may be described as moral attitudes consist in certain patterns of behaviour, and that the expression of a moral judgment is an element in the pattern. The moral judgment expresses the attitude in the sense that it contributes to defining it."

On the question of "why people respond favourably to certain facts and unfavourably to others", Ayer, as a philosopher, has no concern. This, he writes, is a question for the sociologist. The philosopher, that is, takes up the case at the point of the fact that there is generally (to use the language of behaviouristic psychology, which is not out of place in this context) a certain type of 'response' to certain types of 'stimuli'. His task is "only to analyse the use of ethical terms, not scientifically to explain it."

This, in brief, is the newer version of Ayer's analysis of ethical statements. In what sense does it differ from the earlier version? An obvious difference between the two versions is that we no longer see references to the words "feelings" or "sentiments"; but instead we see the words "attitudes", "disposed", and "patterns of behaviour". The word

¹Ibid.

"feelings", as I have mentioned, is of course highly ambiguous, as Professor Ryle so clearly pointed out. (His The Concept of Mind was published in the same year -- 1949 -- as Ayer's paper). As I have argued earlier, Ayer was not clear in his use of the word "feelings" in the first edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, and while he uses the word in both senses, it may be said that he gives undue emphasis to the 'active' or 'occurrence' sense. He does allow for a dispositional analysis, however, and even in the first edition of Language, Truth, and Logic, when he used the phrase "a certain type of action"¹ as leading to the expression of "certain moral sentiments", he is using what Ryle would term "dispositional" rather than "occurrence" language. However, as he allows in the Introduction to the Second Edition, he did not clearly bring out this point. He makes up for this, however, in the Introduction to the Second Edition, when he writes the following passage:

"...the common objects of moral approval or disapproval are not particular actions so much as classes of actions; by which I mean that if an action is labelled right or wrong, or good or bad, as the case may be, it is because it is thought to be an action of a certain type. And this point seems to me important, because I think that what seems to be an ethical judgment is very often a factual classification of an action as belonging to some class of actions by which a certain moral attitude on the part of the speaker is habitually aroused."²

And in other passages in this short section on "The Emotive Theory of Values", he speaks of people who 'disagree' in their ethical evaluations as having different 'attitudes'. Although there would be nothing wrong with continuing to use the words "feelings" and "sentiments" in his later work, so long as he stipulates that he is using them in a dispositional sense, there is a danger of their being considered as occurrence words, or, even worse, 'introspective occurrence' words. Ayer when most cautious, like Ryle and other philosophical analysts, adopts a 'hands off' attitude

¹LTL, p. 107.

²LTL, p. 21.

towards 'introspection'. For him there can be no accusation of perpetrating what Ryle has termed "the ghost in the machine myth".¹ It is preferable, then, to use words which more clearly are understood as being dispositional rather than occurrence words; and Ayer does this in his paper.

In changing his manner of expressing his 'emotive theory of values', however, does Ayer change the theory itself? Acknowledging some conventions of language he now gives us a more cautious expression of the theory, allowing that there is a use of the word "meaningful" which would no longer prompt him to say that ethical statements are 'meaningless'; but this appears to be a bow to conventions of our language rather than to any theory of 'meaning' beyond the 'verificationist' theory. In insisting that the purpose of value judgments is primarily and only 'emotive' he would still assume that such judgments fall short of the ideal achieved, at least in principle, by factual judgments. What is of more importance to note, however, is that he in no significant way modifies his view that ethical statements are distinctly different from factual and scientific statements. Not only are they distinctly different, but there is no way in which we can argue logically from one type to the other. Although we may argue logically about 'facts' which, in turn, may lead to different value judgments from those we had expressed earlier, the relation between the factual statements and the value judgments is psychological and not logical. He thus accepts in an extreme form the distinction referred to by Nowell-Smith as "Hume's gap".

Section 6

Ayer's theory of values, especially the early version, has met with unfavourable criticism, as well as with adulation. I have already mentioned the charge by Sir David Ross that the theory is an "attempt to

¹Op. cit., pp. 15-16.

discredit ethics", and Martin D'Arcy's sarcastic 'gratitude' to Ayer "for having shown us how modern philosophers can fiddle and play tricks while the world burns."¹ But much of this unfavourable criticism has either been based on a misunderstanding of the theory, or from the basis of 'objectivist' assumptions which could not withstand the criticism which a closer reading of Ayer would provide. Criticisms of the theory tend to cover the same main points, and it happens that two of these points are treated in Brand Blanshard's paper "Subjectivism in Ethics--- A Criticism".² Some criticisms, as Ayer pointed out, have been primarily an attack on his positivist epistemology, as if the 'emotive theory of values' would fall if the epistemology falls. The attack by Sir David Ross was of this nature. Now although Ayer's theory of values is certainly influenced by his epistemology, it is not logically entailed by it. It is possible, as Ayer says, to conduct an analysis of the usage of ethical language independently of a specific theory of knowledge; thus the strongest criticisms of his emotive theory should focus on the analysis itself. The attack by Blanshard is primarily of this nature and thus is worth considering.

One of the main points of Blanshard's criticism is the question of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of feelings in some situations. The general theme of his paper is to argue that 'subjectivist' theories of moral philosophy are mistaken, and in his first section he treats the kind of theory as expressed specifically in Language, Truth, and Logic. It is not my intention to defend Ayer's theory, either in the first or second expressions of it, and I have already indicated some of its weaknesses. My purpose is rather to consider whether or not Blanshard is

¹Above, Introduction, p. 7.

²Op. cit.

successful in his intentions. After quoting a key passage in the 'emotivist' (Blanshard terms it 'positivist') analysis, Blanshard goes on to interpret that theory as saying that "when people make...(ethical judgments) they do not mean to assert anything about the character of an act or object." He then writes that he will "try to show that this is what they do mean to assert." This, then, is ostensibly the conclusion to which he will argue in his first section; and the subject of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of 'feelings' is the first of his arguments to support his conclusion.

In opposing Ayer's interpretations of language, Blanshard relies on his own interpretations of the language of "the plain man".

"...everyone takes it for granted," he writes, "that in moral matters feelings are sometimes appropriate and sometimes not; but this assumption is senseless if positivism is correct."¹

To illustrate his point, he cites the example of a painting which depicts the end of a gladiatorial combat in a Roman arena. In the painting, the victor, with sword upraised, stands over his prostrate opponent and is looking to the spectators for the sign for 'mercy' or 'no mercy'. Among the spectators, "a group of elegant ladies, with languid amusement, are turning their thumbs down." Blanshard supposes that "everyone finds it shocking who considers it at all" (with the exception, we might insert, of the Roman ladies in their own time), and he expresses the value judgment that "languid amusement is hardly the appropriate frame of mind with which to greet the blotting out of life in blood and pain." Such "inappropriate feelings", he suggests, are in fact morally bad or wrong.

"My first difficulty with positivism," he continues, "is that it would reduce all such answers (to questions concerning the appropriateness of feelings) to meaninglessness. It holds that there is nothing bad in death and pain themselves, and nothing wrong in inflicting either on anyone. Nothing answering to these value words enters the scene until someone assumes an attitude. But if this is true, it follows that no

¹Op. cit., p. 128.

such attitude is ever more appropriate or inappropriate than any other, since the ground which could make anything appropriate has been removed. If an attitude of favouring is to be appropriate, there must be that in the object which makes it so; and if, independently of the attitude, the object is wholly valueless, there is nothing left which could justify either favour or disfavour."¹

There are several points here which one could challenge. To begin with, there is nothing in Ayer's theory, even in the early version, which could be construed as supporting or rejecting the use of the value statement "there is nothing bad in death and pain themselves, and nothing wrong in inflicting either on anyone." In his later version, published two years prior to the publication of Blanshard's paper, Ayer explicitly rejects the interpretation which Blanshard later gives.

"I am not saying that nothing is good or bad, right or wrong," Ayer writes, "or that it does not matter what we do. For... such a statement would itself be the expression of a moral attitude."²

His task as a moral philosopher has nothing to do with whether or not the languid amusement of the ladies is appropriate, even though he, like Blanshard, (but not as a moral philosopher) may make his own moral judgments about the ladies ---just as the ladies made their own moral judgments in languidly turning their thumbs down. Ayer could in fact express ethical statements similar to Blanshard's about the situation, and quite probably would do so, but whether he does or not is irrelevant. His task as a moral philosopher is to analyse the statements which ladies in such situations might make, or, for that matter, the statements of any moralist, including those of Blanshard in this context. "To analyse moral judgments," writes Ayer, "is not itself to moralize." His "meta-ethical theory," he goes on to say, "is neutral as regards all moral principles."³

¹Op. cit., p. 128.
³Ibid., p. 248.

²Philosophical Essays, p. 246.

A minor point to raise in passing is to ask what Blanshard could mean by saying that when people make ethical judgments they do mean to assert something about the character of an object (in addition to an 'act'). Ayer admittedly invites this kind of language when he allows, in the early version of his theory, that the function of the relevant ethical word is "to express feelings about certain objects..."¹ There may be a convention of language that would allow one to use the word "object" in this way, but I cannot think of what it could be. Nor, it should be noted, can A. C. Ewing, who, in taking a similar approach as Blanshard in his dispute with emotivism, explicitly rejected this convention. In writing about what could be meant by the "'objectivity' of ethical judgments or of value judgments in general," Ewing said that "it obviously does not mean that they ascribe value properties to physical objects. These clearly do not possess ethical qualities."² As I have mentioned, however, this is a minor point of disagreement.

The second main point to challenge in Blanshard's first argument is that he argues from the assumptions of an objectivist theory which is itself impossible to demonstrate, and which, in any event, as Ayer argues, is irrelevant to moral philosophy. In the final paragraph of his section dealing with Ayer's theory, Blanshard writes that "in judgments of good and bad we do commonly mean to say something about objects, something believed to hold apart from the accident of the judgment itself." Possibly the objectivist assumptions are nowhere more apparent than they are in a phrase from the quotation which introduced his argument.

"Nothing answering to these value words enters the scene until someone assumes an attitude; and any goodness or badness that supervenes is wholly conferred by this attitude."³

¹LTL, p. 108.
³Op. cit., p. 128.

²Ewing, The Definition of Good, p. 1.

The emotivist would of course want to rephrase such a statement, since it is expressed in logically misleading language ---language which leads one to assume an 'objectivist' theory of values. Ayer might well begin by saying that ethical terms are not used until they are used, and that his task as a moral philosopher does not begin until they are used. There is nothing in his theory, as we have seen, which would prevent him, qua moralist, from saying that the type of situation depicted by the painting is wrong (or right), always was wrong (or right), and always will be wrong (or right). His task as a moral philosopher, however, is to analyse such value statements, and not, irrelevantly, to judge either the situation or the value statements in terms of his own moral standards.

Above all, however, Ayer could go on to say that Blanshard's argument is pointless in that it depends on arguing for one side of the 'subjectivist-objectivist antithesis' which is "out of place in moral philosophy."¹ A subjectivist arguing for the opposite side would similarly be arguing pointlessly so far as moral philosophy is concerned. Ayer of course had himself invited the label of "subjectivism" in Language, Truth, and Logic, for, while consistently rejecting what he termed "orthodox subjectivist theories", he did allow that his own theory might be termed "radically subjectivist".² But even in the earlier version, the theory does not invite comparison with 'objectivist' theories in the familiar 'subjectivist-objectivist' controversy. This is clarified in the later version. It is pointless, he says, for subjectivists and objectivists to argue for their respective positions as if this would have any bearing on moral decisions.

"The problem," he writes, "is not that the subjectivist denies that certain wild or domesticated animals, 'objective values', exist and the objectivist triumphantly produces them; or that

¹Philosophical Essays, p. 242.

²LTL, p. 109.

the objectivist returns like an explorer with tales from the kingdom of values and the subjectivist says he is a liar. It does not matter what the explorer finds or does not find. For talking about values is not a matter of describing what may or may not be there. There is no such problem. The moral problem is: What am I to do? What attitude am I to take? And moral judgments are directives in this sense."¹

Ayer has more to say about this in his paper, but in view of what we have already seen concerning his distinction between the uses of ethical and factual statements, I believe the point is clear. It is of interest, nevertheless, that in extending his argument against the relevance of an insistence on 'objectivism' in moral philosophy, he uses the same argument which G.E. Moore had used in his exposition of 'the naturalistic fallacy'.² Let us suppose, suggests Ayer, that the objectivist does have the kind of experience he purports to have, of intuiting objective values. He, the objectivist, can still raise such questions as the following:

"Are these values the real ones? Are the objects that I am experiencing themselves really valuable, and how can I know they are?"³

How, asks Ayer, are these questions to be answered? Even if the objectivist suggests that "the value...may be something that it does not occur to us to question," it is not "inconceivable that the value should be questioned." Thus, as Ayer writes, "these alleged objective values perform no function." So long as it is conceivable, that is, to ask if the objective 'characteristic' is valuable, there can be no resolution, within such a theory, of the fundamental moral questions, "What am I to do?", and (to translate Ayer's question slightly), "What moral judgments am I to stand by?" The conclusion is, therefore, that "the whole dispute about the objectivity of values, as it is ordinarily conducted, is pointless and idle."

If the objectivist continues to argue that some such theory as his is necessary, since a theory of moral philosophy is needed which would

¹ Philosophical Essays, p. 242.
³ Philosophical Essays, p. 243.

² Above, p. 74.

provide more 'objective certainty' than any subjectivist theories could offer, we are reminded that Ayer had clearly established that the alleged certainty of the 'intuitionist' and 'moral sense' theorist is neither more nor less 'certain' than the claims of the self-avowed subjectivist¹; but this question, in any event, is no longer relevant.

Blanshard uses a second main argument in support of his claim that the 'positivist' analysis misinterprets the conventions of the ethical language of "the plain man", and that when we make ethical statements "we do commonly mean to say something about objects, something believed to hold apart from the accident of the judgment itself." This argument is most pointed when it concerns ethical judgments about something that happened in the past. Blanshard introduces his argument in the following manner:

"The positivist view requires us to hold (a) that if our statement had not been made, there would have been nothing good or bad in the event when it occurred, and (b) that if the event had not occurred, all the good or evil that our judgment indicates would come into being anyhow, by reason of our attitude. Both of these implications conflict flagrantly with the intention of such judgment."²

Now as I have already indicated there is a sense in which the first version of Ayer's theory may be charged with not giving an adequate explanation of ethical judgments about actions in the past. That is to say, any theory which maintains that the purpose of ethical judgments is to express and evoke 'feelings' (with "feelings" used in the 'occurrence' sense) cannot adequately account for the fact that we may judge an action of the past as being just as wrong as any similar action we may experience now, even though we may experience none of the 'feelings' which the present action 'stimulates'. This is not the argument pressed by Blanshard,

¹Above, p. 76.

²Op. cit., p. 130.

however, as may be seen from the preceding quotation. Such an argument, in any event, would not be effective against Ayer's later expression of his theory in which he emphasizes 'attitudes' in the 'dispositional' sense. Blanshard presses a different argument, however, and if what he says is sound it would apply equally against either the early or later version of Ayer's theory. Blanshard's argument, that is, is, first, that "the plain man" would assume that the action of Brutus, for example, was morally wrong (or right) even if no person had been present to judge it; and, secondly, that 'goodness' or 'badness' do not "come into being" simply when a person 'assumes' or 'has' an 'attitude' of approval or disapproval. Blanshard's argument is meaningful, however, only on the assumption that there are objective 'characteristics' or 'qualities' which are assumed to exist independently of any judgment or judge. Blanshard is not so much concerned with purposes for which ethical statements might be used as he is concerned with the ethical characteristics which he assumes are denoted by ethical predicates. This is of course an objectivist concern, and Blanshard's whole argument presses for an objectivist interpretation of the conventions of language. Ayer's arguments to indicate that the objectivist-subjectivist antithesis is pointless may again be recalled. What is the point of arguing that objective values may or may not have existed in the past? If they did exist, which seems impossible to demonstrate, are they "the real ones?", "are they really valuable?", and "how can I know they are?" If we can ask such questions, what purpose would these objective values serve in a situation which calls for ethical decision? Blanshard uses several other minor arguments against Ayer in support of his two main arguments, but, in general, and because his arguments are ultimately dependent on his objectivist assumptions, his section against Ayer fails in its intention.

There is a sense, however, as I have indicated, in which one might charge Ayer with not giving an adequate account of the 'descriptive' or 'factual' meaning of value judgments---although to concede this point does not require giving in to the objectivist. When Blanshard argues that in making value judgments we commonly mean to assert something about the action or person judged, he is thinking in terms of some non-natural ethical predicate. But if one argued against Ayer that ethical judgments, while serving their ethical purposes, and while 'indicating' something about the judger's moral code, also assert something of a descriptive or factual nature about the person or situation judged, then this could hardly be denied. As I have mentioned, the tendency for moral philosophers to use highly abstract ethical terms such as "good" and "right", together with Ayer's assumption that words may serve only one purpose at one time, would obscure the fact that ethical words may also serve a descriptive purpose. In saying that a man is just, for example, the word "just" not only serves its ethical purpose (whatever that may precisely be), but it also tells us something of a descriptive nature about the man. As we shall see in the next chapter, Stevenson takes such an approach without either giving up an emotivist analysis or conceding any points to the non-naturalist objectivist. Ayer's theory, both in its early and its modified forms, too narrowly conceives the purposes which ethical words and statements may serve, and this is a fundamental weakness of his emotive theory of values.

A further main criticism which I have previously mentioned is the charge that if the theory were sound it would be impossible for people to contradict one another in questions of value---a conclusion which is

held to be absurd.¹ (This question concerning ethical disagreement is one we shall have to consider in greater detail in the next chapter). Obviously this is a charge which Ayer does not treat lightly, for, as we have seen in his example of the two observers of the murder case, he felt that his manner of expressing the first version of his theory was an oversimplification; and in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth, and Logic he devoted a considerable portion of his short section "The Emotive Theory of Values" to this very question. In view of the modifications we have seen in his paper, however, it would be pointless to continue to say that his theory could not condone the use of language which asserts that people contradict one another in questions of values. The fundamental question concerns the use of the word "contradict". Enough has been said, I believe, to indicate how he would use the word. To generalize the point, contradictory ethical statements, considered in terms of their ethical use, are contradictory in terms of the conflicting 'attitudes' which agents seek to express and evoke. Considered in terms of their use for ethical purposes (and not in terms of other, less relevant uses) they are not contradictory in the same sense in which factual, empirical statements may be said to be contradictory.

An interesting feature of this criticism of Ayer's theory is that those who make it, and those who take it seriously, appear to assume a theory of meaning which I have referred to as a 'meaning in terms only of a referent' theory. That is to say, they assume that words like "good" and "right" must have specific, objective 'designata',² whether these

¹Cf., Ewing, The Definition of Good, p. 12. Ewing does not refer to Ayer by name, but the theory which he criticizes could be Ayer's. It is of interest that in his most recent book, Second Thoughts in Moral Philosophy, Ewing modifies his attack on emotivist theories, although he remains an objectivist.

²Cf., above, p. 89.

'designata' are considered to be natural or non-natural. Thus when I say "X is good" I predicate the appropriate designatum of X, and when you say "X is not good" you deny that X has the designatum, that is, you contradict me. The corollary is that when the word "good" is said not to have any designatum in this objective sense, as would be the case in Ayer's theory, we would utter these apparently conflicting statements but what we say would not be contradictory in the strict sense since our relevant ethical words are designatum-less or 'meaningless'. But if we regard ethical sentences as used primarily for some other purpose than describing or designating (either natural or non-natural predicates), then it seems nonsensical to suggest that they cannot be said to be contradictory simply because they do not serve a purpose for which they are not used. To persist in saying that they cannot be contradictory is not to press a point of logic, but is rather to beg the question for some type of 'meaning in terms only of a referent' theory of meaning, whether it be a 'verificationist' theory, on the one hand, or some type of intuitionist objectivist theory on the other. With the 'verificationist' background which coloured especially the early expression of his emotivist analysis, Ayer undoubtedly invited this attack. But his very assertion of the emotivist theory, as we shall see when considering Stevenson's theory of 'emotive meaning', points the way out of any need to be concerned with the charge---although it points also to the limitations of the 'verificationist' theory of meaning.

What, in general, may be said about Ayer's emotive theory of values?---Although he has modified his manner of expressing his theory, he does not essentially alter it. That is to say, he strictly maintains the 'autonomy of morals', and he insists that the purpose of moral judgments is 'emotive'. In the later version of his theory, as we have seen, he writes that moral judgments "may be regarded as expressing the

attitude which the reasons given for it are calculated to evoke." There is no suggestion that 'reasons' are logically related to 'moral attitudes' or to the moral judgments which express such 'attitudes'. For Ayer, the relationship is strictly 'psychological' or 'causal'. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, each of the philosophers I have chosen to study will have something to say about this relationship. Each of them will also have something to say, either implicitly or explicitly, about other aspects of the kind of emotive theory postulated by Ayer. Whatever may be said in criticism of his theory, however, it would be difficult to detract from the importance of his contribution to the history of moral philosophy. In the language of the logical analyst Ayer has clearly restated Hume's challenge in a manner that should give pause to any cognitivist.

Although there have also been later papers, I shall consider the book as the primary source for this treatment of Stevenson.

In his book he briefly mentions several recent and contemporary philosophers who have influenced him, and he devoted separate sections to Dewey, A.D. Perry, and G.E. Moore. He also mentions, in one section, the writings of Gessup, Ayer, Russell, Ogden and Richards, and other positivists. While he has some reservations about the early expressions of the emotive theory of values, he acknowledges, nevertheless, that his work "finds much more to defend in the analyses of Gessup, Ayer, and the others, than it finds to attack."¹ His work, while influenced by others, especially by Wittgenstein, is thus firmly in the Humean tradition, and it is not surprising that in a section devoted to Hume he has said the very

¹ "Moral Judgments and Availability", and "Emotive Judgments", both in *Philosophy*, Vol. XLVII, 1972.

² *Philosophy and Language*, p. 207. Other references, and other references to language in footnotes, I shall use the initials G.

CHAPTER III

C. L. STEVENSON

Section 1

In 1937, one year after the appearance of Ayer's Language, Truth, and Logic, C.L. Stevenson published a paper in Mind entitled "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms". In the following year he published two more papers¹ which stemmed from the first; and then, in 1945, these writings were brought together, with some qualifications, in his Ethics and Language. Although there have also been later papers, I shall consider the book as the primary source for this treatment of Stevenson.

In his book he briefly mentions several recent and contemporary philosophers who have influenced him, and he devotes separate sections to Dewey, R.B. Perry, and G.E. Moore. He also considers, in one section, the writings of Carnap, Ayer, Russell, Ogden and Richards, and other emotivists. While he has some reservations about the early expressions of the emotive theory of values, he acknowledges, nevertheless, that his work "finds much more to defend in the analyses of Carnap, Ayer, and the others, than it finds to attack."² His work, while influenced by others, especially by Wittgenstein, is thus firmly in the Humean tradition, and it is not surprising that in a section devoted to Hume he has this to say:

¹"Ethical Judgments and Avoidability", and "Persuasive Definitions", both in Mind, Vol. XLVII, 1938.

²Ethics and Language, p. 267. Note: henceforth, when citing Ethics and Language in footnotes, I shall use the initials EL.

"Of all traditional philosophers, Hume has most clearly asked the questions that here concern us, and has most nearly reached a conclusion that the present writer can accept."¹

Stevenson's purpose is not, then, to erect a new theory so much as it is to qualify an older one. Indeed, after making the statement about the "analyses of Carnap, Ayer, and the others," he says that his work "seeks only to qualify their views...and to free them from any seeming cynicism." The purpose of this present chapter will be to outline and assess Stevenson's qualifications to the emotive theory of values.

The general plan for this chapter will be as follows: in the remainder of this first section I shall consider Stevenson's 'preliminary distinctions', especially his distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', and between 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' uses of language. In considering these distinctions it will be necessary to consider his 'psychological' or 'pragmatic' theory of meaning. In Sections 2 and 3 I shall summarize his two 'patterns of analysis' of ethical terms and ethical methodology. Section 4 will be the conclusion for the chapter. While this general plan will serve to indicate the main topics which I shall discuss, it must not be construed as suggesting that there are aspects of Stevenson's theory which may be considered in isolation from others. As it happens, all of these topics are inextricably related within the exposition of Stevenson's theory, and it will be found that in this chapter, as in his book, there is a certain amount of over-lapping between any one topic and one or more of the others.

In the very first paragraph of his book Stevenson introduces an important qualification. In that paragraph he cites the following two objects of his work:

¹EL, p. 273.

"Its first object is to clarify the meaning of the ethical terms--- such as 'good', 'right', 'just', 'ought', and so on. Its second object is to characterize the general methods by which ethical judgments can be proved or supported."

The innovation (while implicit in the first object, as will be apparent later) is of course explicit in the second object, for to assume at the outset that "ethical judgments can be proved or supported" is certainly to suggest something different from Ayer's early statement that "sentences which simply express moral judgments do not say anything."¹ Stevenson appears, also, to be saying something different from Hume's statement that it is impossible that ethical statements "can be pronounced either true or false, and to be either contrary or conformable to reason."² It is in elaborating and supporting this qualification that Stevenson, if successful, would make a distinctive contribution to the history of moral philosophy.

In interpersonal situations a person need be concerned with proving or supporting his ethical judgments only when one or more other people disagree with him; and Stevenson says that in making his argument the question which "will prove to be of central importance", more 'central', that is, than the apparently central and closely related question concerning the meaning of ethical terms, is the question, "What is the nature of ethical agreement and disagreement?"³ He by no means suggests that agreement and disagreement between persons constitutes the whole class of normative problems. He realizes that as a result of concentrating upon agreement and disagreement, there are some normative problems to which his approach will not be directly relevant. There are, for example, problems which arise in personal deliberation, rather than in interpersonal

¹LTL, p. 108. Cf., above, Ch. II, pp. 104-6 for Ayer's later version which is similar to Stevenson's.

²Cf., above, Ch. I, p. 39.

³EL, p. 2.

discourse, and which involve not disagreement or agreement but simply uncertainty or growing conviction." But, as he expects to show later in his book, his approach is indirectly relevant to such normative problems, and, meanwhile, "there is a convenience in looking chiefly to the interpersonal problems, where the use of terms and methods is most clearly evidenced."¹ Ten years later, in a review of Nowell-Smith's Ethics, he allows that "it is by no means easy to handle both the personal and the interpersonal problems without slighting one at the expense of the other,"² and he regrets that his approach in Ethics and Language might have created the false impression that he had neglected personal problems altogether. In his review, however, he maintains, quite rightly,³ that he had not neglected personal problems in his book, that, in fact, he "was at pains to show that each party is as frequently intent upon straightening out his own attitudes as in convincing someone else...." He begins, then, by concentrating on interpersonal problems; and, for the sake of simplicity, he decides to focus his attention on 'disagreement', treating 'agreement' by implication.

In elaborating his suggestion that in cases of disagreement normative judgments may be 'proved' or 'supported', he next introduces a distinction which is fundamental to his whole argument. "...Let us begin," he says, "by distinguishing two broad kinds of disagreement." These two kinds, he goes on to say, are "disagreement in belief", and "disagreement in attitude."⁴

The notion of "disagreement in belief", he suggests, is familiar to us and "will require only brief attention." (This statement, as we shall see, would be challenged by some philosophers, since they would

¹Ibid.

²Mind, vol. LXIV, 1955, p. 409.

³Cf., EL, pp. 130-134; 147-151; & 238-9.

⁴EL, pp. 2-3.

challenge Stevenson's distinction between beliefs and attitudes.) Such disagreements in belief "occur in science, history, biography, and their counterparts in everyday life...." Among other examples, he cites the following:

"Questions about the nature of light-transmission, the voyages of Leif Ericson, and the date on which Jones was last in to tea, are all similar in that they involve an opposition that is primarily of beliefs.... In such cases one man believes that p is the answer, and another that not-p, or some proposition incompatible with p, is the answer; and in the course of discussion each tries to give some manner of proof for his view, or revise it in the light of further information."¹

For Hume and the early Ayer, Stevenson's disagreement in belief would be the full extent of 'meaningful' disagreement.

But, according to Stevenson, we must not suppose that the word "disagreement" has no further use.

"There are other cases," he writes, "differing sharply from these, which may yet be called 'disagreements' with equal propriety. They involve an opposition, sometimes tentative and gentle, sometimes strong, which is not of beliefs, but rather of attitudes---that is to say, an opposition of purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires, and so on."

Such disagreement he terms "disagreement in attitude." Some writers are tempted, he believes, to "overintellectualize" situations in which there is disagreement in attitude, to analyse them, that is, in terms of 'beliefs'. Thus he gives a number of examples which make clear what he intends when he speaks of disagreements in attitude:

"Mrs. A has social aspirations, and wants to move with the elite. Mr. A is easy-going, and loyal to his old friends. They accordingly disagree about what guests they will invite to their party. The curator of the museum wants to buy pictures by contemporary artists; some of his advisers prefer the purchase of old masters. They disagree. John's mother is concerned about the dangers of playing football, and doesn't want him to play. John, even though he agrees (in belief) about the dangers, wants to play anyhow. Again, they disagree."

¹Ibid.

In a comparison summarizing the two kinds of disagreement, he writes the following passage:

"The two kinds of disagreement differ mainly in this respect: The former is concerned with how matters are truthfully to be described and explained; the latter is concerned with how they are to be favoured or disfavoured, and hence with how they are to be shaped by human efforts."

In saying that there may be disagreement in attitude he would not be saying very much if what he said amounted only to pointing to a different convention of the usage of the word "disagreement"; for to say that people 'favour' different things is not to say anything that Hume and Ayer have not said. The point of difference, however, as we shall see, is that Stevenson wishes to maintain that there can be disagreements in attitude that show themselves in the meanings of words: that there is a usage of the word "meaning" which is as appropriate when speaking of language which expresses attitudes as it is when speaking of language which expresses beliefs.

There is an obvious possibility of confusion between the notions of "disagreement in attitudes" and "disagreement about attitudes"; and Stevenson makes a special point of clarifying his usage of these phrases.

"Suppose Mr. Nearthewind maintains that most voters favor a certain bill, and Mr. Closerstill maintains that most of them are against it. It is clear that the two men disagree, and that their disagreement concerns attitudes---namely, the attitudes they believe the voters to have. But are Nearthewind and Closerstill disagreeing in attitude? Clearly not. So far as their above contentions show, they are disagreeing in belief about attitudes, and need not be disagreeing in attitude at all. Disagreement in belief about attitudes is simply a special sort of disagreement in belief, differing from disagreement in belief about head colds only with regard to subject matter."¹

A further preliminary distinction which will be seen to be of great importance to his theory is that we must not suppose that "every argument

¹EL, p. 4.

represents one sort of disagreement to the exclusion of the others." Within individual arguments, that is, "there is often disagreement of both sorts."

"Our attitudes, as many have pointed out, often affect our beliefs, not only by causing us to indulge in wishful thinking, but also by leading us to develop and check such beliefs as point out the means of getting what we want. And conversely, our beliefs often affect our attitudes; for we may alter our form of approval of something when we change our beliefs about its nature....Any implication that the alternatives are mutually exclusive can only be rejected. The influence goes both ways, although at times only one direction of influence may predominate."¹

In attempting to ascertain these relationships, he says, we must appreciate that the relationship "is always factual, never logical." There are four logical possibilities among such factual relationships; namely, (1) "disagreement in belief without disagreement in attitude," (2) "disagreement in attitude without disagreement in belief," (3) "both sorts of disagreement occur conjointly," and (4) neither may occur. If we are, then, to ascertain which of these possibilities, "in any given case or class of cases, is in fact realized," we "must appeal to experience." But, he continues, "experience clearly shows...that the cases which involve both sorts of disagreement (or agreement) are extremely numerous."²

These, then, are the preliminary distinctions with which Stevenson begins to undertake his task of answering the question, "What is the nature of ethical agreement and disagreement?". Before he proceeds, however, he pauses to examine a basic assumption which underlies all of his preliminary distinctions. "Our distinction between the sorts of disagreement," he writes, "has presupposed a more general one---that between beliefs and attitudes."³ This is obviously a distinction of crucial importance to his theory, as it is indeed to the emotivism of

¹EL, p. 5.
³EL, p. 7.

²EL, p. 7.

Hume and Ayer. If no clear distinction can be made between Stevenson's use of the terms "beliefs" and "attitudes", there can be no clear distinction, for him, between what has been termed "descriptive" (or 'theoretical', or 'fact-stating' or 'scientific') language on the one hand, and "evaluative" language on the other. If evaluative language, for the emotivist, is related to 'attitudes', then to support an emotive theory of values he must be able to say that 'attitudes' are able to be distinguished from 'beliefs'. This would be of special importance to earlier emotivists who appeared to regret that value statements did not behave as 'meaningfully' as factual or descriptive statements (beliefs). If no distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' is able to be maintained, and if factual statements (belief statements) are held to be the unquestioned 'good citizens' of language, as they were by Ayer (and other logical empiricists), then it would seem reasonable for emotivists to become cognitivists.

The relation between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' on the one hand, and descriptive and evaluative language on the other, is of course inextricable for Stevenson, since, if he is able to show that a distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' can be preserved, he cannot do so without first undertaking an analysis of our linguistic behaviour. This is not to say that the relationship between an 'attitude' and evaluative language is necessary and direct, for there are other ways of expressing or evincing attitudes, and language may often be a crude 'vehicle' for expressing 'attitudes'. As we shall see, in making his distinction he relies to some extent also on the observation of our non-linguistic behaviour.

As I have mentioned earlier, his distinction has come under attack from other philosophers. Mary Warnock intimates that the distinction is a lingering crudity of the emotive theory. At the end of her section

devoted to Ayer, and immediately prior to treating Stevenson, she writes the following passage:

"Although, as we shall see in a moment, the first crudity of the emotive theory was rubbed off very soon, what was not questioned was the distinction between descriptive and evaluative language. The belief that somewhere behind all discourse there lay a pure array of facts, with pure fact-stating statements belonging to it with which evaluative statements could be contrasted--this belief seems to have had a far longer life in the field of ethics than anywhere else."¹

It is to Stevenson's credit that, despite Mrs. Warnock's contradictory suggestion, he did question the basic distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', and thus the distinction between the language which expresses 'beliefs' and 'attitudes'. In Ethics and Language, as we have already seen, he was clearly aware of the importance of this distinction to his theory. He was also aware of possible criticisms.²

"Like so many psychological distinctions," he writes, (the distinction)...is not easily made clear. Would further analysis serve to undermine it? Does any sharp separation reflect an antiquated school of thought, in which beliefs are so many mental photographs, the product of a special cognitive faculty, whereas attitudes stand apart as the drives or forces of a totally different faculty?"³

Accepting, then, that he was clearly aware of the problem, we might ask, nevertheless, if he is able to preserve the distinction.

There are several ways in which the distinction might be criticized, and perhaps the most obvious one is mentioned by Stevenson himself when he asks if his "sharp separation" of 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' may reflect an antiquated compartmental theory of psychology, one in which man is viewed as if he were a creature composed of two separate and distinct faculties, one of which might be termed a "cognitive faculty" and the other an "emotive faculty". Possibly one of the most explicit expressions

¹Mary Warnock, Ethics since 1900, p. 93.

²See also his "Meaning: Descriptive and Emotive", Philosophical Review, Vol. 57, 1948.

³EL, p. 2.

of such a view was written, as recently as 1932, when John Muirhead referred to it as "the general principle of idealistic Moral Philosophy...."

"The principle was long ago laid down by Plato," wrote Muirhead. "Man is a being of divided nature---a union of instincts and desires having their source in the semi-physical organism we call the body and directed to their satisfaction in finite temporal things like food and shelter, and an intelligence or soul with a nisus to objects which, though not particular things at all, are realities which can be appropriated by it...."¹

Such a theory might also be suggested by specifically religious views which differentiate, within man, between the alleged separate entities of soul and body. As might be expected of a contemporary empiricist philosopher, however, Stevenson will have nothing to do with such psychological assumptions, and, among repeated warnings not to hypostatize terms, he specifically warns against the temptation to hypostatize the psychological terms "belief" and "attitude".² It must be apparent, then, that whatever must be his approach, his distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' does not rest on any hypostatic psychology.

A second possible criticism of the distinction is that which is indicated in Mrs. Warnock's criticism when she says that emotivists tend to retain "the belief that somewhere behind all discourse there...(lies) a pure array of facts, with pure fact-stating statements belonging to it with which evaluative statements could be contrasted...." The suggestion is that emotivists hold an outmoded theory of meaning, possibly the 'psychological atomism' of earlier British empiricists, especially Locke and Hume, but more probably the positivist theory which is the modern offspring of that earlier view. In retrospect Carnap has summed up the modern view in the following words:

"Positivists...believed that every description of science could

¹Muirhead, Rule and End in Morals, pp. 3-4 ff.
²EL, pp. 7, 8, 67.

be defined by perception terms, and hence, that every sentence of the language of science could be translated into a sentence about perceptions."¹

Again despite Mrs. Warnock's suggestion, Stevenson cannot be accused of holding either of these views. Of those who held the picture or image theory of meaning, as Hume did, Stevenson says that they "have been criticised too often to require further attention"² in his book. Nor can he be said to hold the modern logical positivist view. When he gives a partial analysis of the word "meaning" (which I shall outline shortly), endeavouring to find a generic sense of the word which would permit him to say that value statements along with descriptive statements are meaningful, he finds that all such 'meaning as referent', and 'meaning as verification' theories are too restricted for his purposes. This point is made in the following passage:

"There is one sense (among many others) which, though conventional enough, will be unsuitable for our purpose. In this sense the 'meaning' of a sign is that to which people refer when they use the sign. (E.G.: 'The meaning of "cake" is edible'; 'The meaning of "hardness" is a characteristic of flint.') It will be convenient to replace 'meaning', so used, by the term 'referent', following Ogden and Richards. The sense cannot be the generic one required, for we shall want to say that some words (such as 'alas') have no referent, but do have a kind of meaning---namely emotive meaning."³

What Urmson has to say about Stevenson's criticism of the verification principle is appropriate in this context, not only because it reveals that Stevenson has gone beyond positivist theories, but also because it will be helpful in understanding Stevenson's approach to meaning.

"Stevenson invokes a use of language not previously recognized," writes Urmson, "a use of indicative sentences to which the simple dichotomies, analytic-synthetic, true-false, tautological-self-contradictory are not applicable. The recognition of this richer variety of the uses of language is one of the marks of the new

¹Carnap, "Testability and Meaning", from Readings in the Philosophy of Science, p. 67.

²EL, p. 62.

³EL, p. 42.

period. The tendency now will be, though not perfectly realized, to ask questions like, 'What are people doing when they use ethical, scientific, metaphysical language, claim knowledge, or express belief, make promises, or express sympathy?' without trying to fit them all into a priori categories."¹

As Stevenson himself puts it, "everyday life presents us not with 'a' usage of terms, but with many different usages."²

This distinction between usages of language is not only central to his partial analysis of 'meaning', but also to his assertion that disagreement in attitude may be said to be 'meaningful'. It will also serve to indicate how he distinguishes between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', as we shall see shortly. Considering ways in which we use language, he pointed out that we may differentiate between two broad purposes; and these two purposes, as we might expect, correspond to the two types of disagreement. That is to say, we recognize that one obvious purpose of language is to express 'beliefs'; and this usage of language might be termed "descriptive". (While the term "descriptive" is perhaps unfortunate in that the purpose for which it is used is broader than the purpose which is conventionally served when we speak of describing something, nevertheless there is no harm in using the word for the purpose stipulated by Stevenson so long as we do not confuse this use with other conventions.) In addition to using language for 'descriptive' purposes, however, we also use it for purposes beyond the 'descriptive'. There is, as he had said in his paper, "Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", a 'dynamic' use of language, although in his book he replaces the word "dynamic" with "emotive". Perhaps the most obvious example of the 'dynamic' or 'emotive' use of language is our use of 'imperatives', with which we are not primarily concerned to 'describe' anything, nor to 'communicate' a 'belief', but are concerned

¹Urmson, Philosophical Analysis, p. 172.

²EL, p. 34.

to motivate the agent to whom we direct such language to act in a desired way. Imperatives comprise one species of emotive language, and value judgments, including ethical value judgments, comprise another species. Stevenson is not concerned to give criteria for differentiating between sub-species of value judgments (between, for example, aesthetic and ethical value judgments), and seems to assume that these may be differentiated in their use. Considering emotive language in general, he says that its purpose is to "evoke or directly express attitudes"¹ (and by "attitudes" he means "purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires, and so on.")² In making this distinction, however, he says, as we have seen, that a single term need not serve only one purpose, but may serve many different purposes. Thus we must not suppose that any particular statement will serve only one purpose. This distinction, as I shall indicate later, is possibly Stevenson's most important contribution to the history of the emotive theory of values. The early Ayer, like Hume, clearly separated ethical language from descriptive language, saying, in effect, that language used to 'express' an ethical value judgment serves only one purpose, while 'factual' or 'descriptive' language serves another. Speaking of ethical terms, for example, Ayer had said that in an ethical statement "the function of the relevant ethical word is purely emotive", while speaking of ethical statements he had said that "if a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in asking whether what it says is true or false."³ Stevenson, however, allows that, in varying reciprocal degrees, both purposes may be served at one and the same time in our use of individual terms and individual statements.

¹EL, p. 33.

²Cf., above, p. 122.

³LTL, p. 108.

"For the contexts that are most typical of normative ethics", he writes, "the ethical terms have a function that is both emotive and descriptive."¹ And, in going beyond the early but not the later writings of Ayer, both 'functions' may be said to be 'meaningful'.

In proposing a theory of meaning which would serve to include these two main 'functions' of language, Stevenson seeks "a general theory of signs".² Such a theory, he says, must be of such a nature that will allow us to say that the term "meaning" can be "ascribed some conventional use that marks off a genus, of which emotive meaning will be a species, and descriptive meaning another."³ As I have mentioned, he has said that the 'meaning as referent' theory, although "conventional enough", will not do for his purpose (since if this were the only criterion for meaningfulness he must say, as Ayer did, that emotive words are 'meaningless'). There is another conventional use of the word "meaning", however, which is more promising:

"In this sense," he writes, "the 'meaning' of a sign must be defined in terms of the psychological reactions of those who use the sign. It may be called 'meaning in the psychological sense,' or in Morris' terminology, 'meaning in the pragmatic sense.'"⁴

While this sense is more 'promising', it is not adequate, since the emphasis is placed on "the psychological reactions of those who use the sign", and such reactions, he suggests, are too variable. "One of the requirements for any definition of 'meaning'," he writes, "so long as that term is to remain suitable for talking about language, is that meaning must not vary in a bewildering way." He does not suggest that there should be no variation, for this would be to suggest a "fictitious entity". In our

¹EL, p. 84.
³EL, pp. 41-42.

²EL, p. 37.
⁴EL, p. 42.

practice of using language, that is, in any sense of the word "meaning", we recognize variations of the usage of terms in different contexts, and what might be termed variations in 'knowledge' about that for which terms are used. He seeks, then, a theory in which "the meaning of a sign must be relatively constant." He points out, by the way, that we must not suppose that psychological reactions vary only in emotive situations, for they similarly vary in "situations which involve a referent." The responses, for example, to a place-name may vary considerably from person to person, or even from the same individual at different times. If, then, the requisite relative constancy is not to be found in the psychological reactions of the person who uses the sign, Stevenson suggests that it might be found with a change of emphasis, concentrating primarily, that is, on the sign, rather than on the user. Through our being 'elaborately conditioned' to use a sign in specific ways (the learning process), the sign comes to serve in a relatively constant manner, throughout all of its contexts, as a stimulus to reactions on the part of the hearer. What Stevenson terms the "dispositional property" of the sign remains relatively more constant than the reactions of the hearer. As may be expected, he warns against hypostatizing the phrase "dispositional property", and he uses the phrase in the stimulus-response terminology of behaviouristic psychology. 'Meaning' is thus related to the disposition of a sign to serve as a relatively constant stimulus, and this use of the word gives us the required generic sense of the term:

"A sign's disposition to affect a hearer is to be called a 'meaning' (for the not unconventional sense in question) only if it has been caused by, and would not have been developed without, an elaborate process of conditioning which has attended the sign's use in communication."¹

Within this generic sense of the word "meaning" we may now be able to

¹EL, p. 57.

include as species both emotive meaning and descriptive meaning.

"Emotive meaning is a meaning in which the response (from the hearer's point of view) or the stimulus (from the speaker's point of view) is a range of emotions."¹

(He later suggests that, for convenience, the word "emotion" in this 'definition' should be replaced by "feeling or attitude"). The 'definition' of descriptive meaning is as follows:

"The 'descriptive meaning' of a sign is its disposition to affect cognition, provided that the disposition is caused by an elaborate process of conditioning that has attended the sign's use in communication, and provided that the disposition is rendered fixed, at least to a considerable degree, by linguistic rules. (Exception: a term without previous use in communication may be assigned a descriptive meaning if linguistic rules relate it to words that have had such a use.)"²

It is this psychological or pragmatic theory of meaning (for both descriptive and emotive meaning) which will be of importance when we consider his two "patterns of analysis" of ethical language and methodology. When discussing these analyses it will be necessary to look more closely at this theory of 'meaning', especially to consider in what way the two species are related.

While this summary of Stevenson's partial analysis of 'meaning' is all too brief, it may clearly serve, however, to refute any suggestion, such as that intimated by Mrs. Warnock, that his theory, like that of earlier emotivists, is dependent for its distinction between descriptive and evaluative language on any 'meaning as referent', or 'meaning as verification' theory of meaning.³

It is not my intention to quarrel with this approach, nor to quarrel with Stevenson's suggestion that there is a convention for the word "meaning" which we customarily use when we say that value statements

¹EL, p. 59; cf. also p. 33.

²EL, p. 70.

³EL, p. 114 (where Stevenson specifically refers to the limitations of the verification principle).

are meaningful. Nor could I quarrel with his ingenious suggestion that the emphasis for the consideration of psychological or pragmatic meaning should be on the 'dispositional property' of a sign, rather than on the dispositional responses of the hearer of the sign. If one is disposed to quarrel with him one should be prepared to suggest a 'better' or 'more meaningful' analysis of meaning---a far from easy task, as even the most cursory reading of the history of philosophy would indicate. But whether or not a disputant who is involved in a disagreement in attitude (however 'meaningful' his emotive use of language might be said to be) is able to 'prove' or 'support' his position is another matter. This point must be considered when we discuss Stevenson's analyses of ethical language and methodology.

Using this new approach, with the emphasis on the two main purposes of language, and also relying in part on his observation of our non-linguistic behaviour, he makes his distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes'. We might now look more closely at the main argument in which he makes the distinction; although, it will be noted, the argument will amount to no more than a reinforcement of his usage of these words throughout the early pages of his book.

In defense of the distinction, he, in effect, asks what we are doing and what behaviour are we denoting when we customarily use the words "belief" and "attitude". While this approach is primarily in accord with that of the behaviouristic psychologist, it is not Stevenson's intention to discredit it.¹ Any follower of Hume would of course have been forewarned by the realization that many of Hume's difficulties resulted from his reliance on the language of an hypostatic introspective

¹EL, p. 66.

psychology.¹ Stevenson's behaviouristic terminology is obvious in the following passage:

"It is possible, for instance, to accept the pragmatic contention that beliefs and attitudes must both be analysed, partly at least, with reference to dispositions to action. Such a view in no way suggests that beliefs and attitudes are 'identical', so long as it is soberly understood. It shows that they are more alike than the older psychologists suspected, but it does not make them alike in every respect. The common genus does not obliterate all differentiae."²

With this approach, his analysis to indicate the distinction is simple and challenging.

"It is difficult to specify just how beliefs and attitudes differ," he writes, "it remains the case that for practical purposes we do and must make such a distinction every day. A chess player, playing with a novice, uses an opening that appears very weak. An onlooker wonders, 'Does he make the move because he believes that it is a strong one, or because, out of charity to his opponent, he doesn't want to make a strong one?' The distinction here between a belief and a want (attitude) is certainly beyond any practical objection....In the example of the chess player, it may be added, there is no lack of empirical criteria by which the onlooker may determine which attitudes and which beliefs determine the expert's play. No matter where the onlooker's inferences may lead him, he must begin by observing the expert's behaviour, and can find there all the evidence that a practical decision requires."³

In a later chapter, "Pragmatic Aspects of Meaning", he extends his analysis of these words somewhat further, although he has to allow that he has not surmounted the difficulty of giving the differentiae for his key words. Ultimately he does not express the distinction any more clearly than he has done with the example of the chess player; and this is significant. Without making any claims that his method provides the final word, he is confident, nevertheless, that with those means that are currently open to philosophers, especially with his theory of meaning, his distinction may be maintained.

¹Cf., Above, Ch. I, pp. 37 & 59.
³EL, pp. 7-8.

²EL, p. 7.

"...It will be observed," he writes, "that the key terms that are used in the present work--in the analysis both of meaning in general and of ethical meanings--have only such clarity as is afforded by instances of their usage, together with admonitions not to hypostatize and over-simplify. This is not an agreeable admission; but it is difficult to see how, at the present stage of linguistic and psychological theory, any more persistent quest for a definition would be rewarding."¹

There is, however, a further criticism of Stevenson's distinction which should be considered. As we have seen, he asks if "further analysis would serve to undermine the distinction"; and this question expresses the charge that is made. Referring to critics of Stevenson's distinction, Professor L.J. Binkley succinctly sums up the criticism in the following passage:

"Stevenson, it is charged, has failed to realize that agreement in belief, or agreement on matters of fact, is quite as dependent on agreement in attitude as is agreement in ethics. The attainment of agreement in belief, presupposes, at least, that the disputants agree to accept the principle of logical consistency. Now the acceptance of such a principle has been called an 'epistemic attitude', and any reasons which may support it are, in Stevenson's terms, related to it psychologically rather than logically, just as are the supporting reasons of ethical judgments."²

It is important to note that this criticism, unlike the earlier criticisms, might be made by one who is not so much concerned to attack Stevenson's general philosophic method as he is concerned to disagree with his analysis of the conventions of language. Just such a criticism was made by Professor Findlay in his paper, "The Justification of Attitudes". In this paper, after delivering what must be one of the most savage thrusts ever made against Ethics and Language, Professor Findlay undertook to attend to "a certain family of attitudes, once highly regarded but now somewhat neglected," and which, he felt, were "of very central importance in the regulation and direction of human life." In the context of the paper,

¹EL, p. 67.

²L.J. Binkley, Contemporary Ethical Theories, p. 95.

the implication is that Stevenson had neglected this "family of attitudes".

"These are the attitudes," he writes, "that one might group together under such vague titles as 'reasonable', 'dispassionate', 'impartial', 'disinterested' and the like: they represent, in some sense, a determined attempt to steer our attitudinal policies away from anything that is merely personal, contingent, arbitrary, provisional or ill-considered."¹

Findlay's analysis leads him to make a case for his view that this family of attitudes is basic to "reasoned argument"² (some men have them in good measure, for example, Bishop Butler, and thus Findlay terms such attitudes "Butlerian"; and some men have them only partially, for example, the Mau Mau and Nietzsche).

Now, as I have indicated, Stevenson is aware that some scientific disagreements might not be settled in terms only of 'beliefs'; that, in fact, whether some scientific disagreements are resolved will depend on the 'attitudes' of the disputants.

"There are certain evaluative issues," he writes, "that are integral to the very process of organizing knowledge. Interests in knowledge may be opposed, leading theorists to disagree about what is worth speaking of, or what distinctions are important, or what schemes of classification are suitable. These issues are not always factual ones in disguise, concerned with what sort of organization will serve a stipulated purpose; for there may be disagreement about the purpose to be served. They may be genuinely evaluative issues, requiring the use of methods like those we have examined in ethics."³

It might have been of interest if Stevenson had inquired further into the question of the "suitability" of "schemes of classification", for this might have led him to one of Findlay's 'Butlerian' attitudes. He did not, however, and thus what he says does not go so far as is demanded by those critics who would say that at the basis of agreement in belief there are 'epistemic' or 'Butlerian' attitudes---not simply 'attitudes' which dispose one towards resolving a disagreement in belief for the sake

¹J.N. Findlay, op.cit., in Mind, LXIII, 1954, p. 156.

²Findlay, op.cit., p. 160.

³EL, p. 286.

of an end or purpose desired by the disputant, even if it is merely the wish to avoid disagreement, but rather 'attitudes' which may dispose him towards being logical, consistent, disinterested, impartial, and other such 'Butlerian' attitudes listed by Findlay.

Findlay goes so far as to suggest that the possession of Butlerian attitudes is "the principal difference between man and other creatures"¹— but we need not follow him so far. We might agree, nevertheless, that his analysis indicates that there are other conventions for the use of the word "attitude" beyond Stevenson's: that there are what have been termed "epistemic" or "cognitive" attitudes disposing 'Butlerian' people to adhere to norms of deductive logic, axioms and logical procedures of mathematics, and empirically established canons of induction. That is to say, then, that there are 'attitudes' basic to what Stevenson has termed "beliefs", and these 'attitudes' would dispose at least some people to use what we recognize as sound argument, not only in science and everyday life, but also in ethics, aesthetics, religion, and all other spheres of man's activity. It is this kind of distinction which is accepted, also, by John Kemp in his paper, "Moral Attitudes and Moral Judgments", when he maintains that Stevenson's analysis of the word "attitude" is not sufficiently thorough.

But accepting this, must we then say that his distinction between what he has termed "beliefs" and "attitudes" is not acceptable? I think not, and I would agree with at least this much of what Kemp goes on to say:

"If it is considered necessary to adhere closely to ordinary language, and to retain this wider use of the word 'attitude', we could without doing violence to Mr. Stevenson's theory, make

¹Op.cit., p. 160

the distinction one between cognitive attitudes (i.e. belief, disbelief, doubt) and emotive attitudes (i.e. those states which in Ethics and Language are simply called 'attitudes'). What the theory would then be saying is that moral approval and disapproval are essentially emotive, not cognitive, attitudes."¹

The third aspect of the general criticism against the fundamental distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' would thus not serve to undermine the distinction if the effect is simply to show that there is a more basic use of the word "attitude", a use which Stevenson had ignored in his analysis. Indeed, this particular criticism is of a nature which would probably be appealing to any follower of Hume, for what Findlay termed 'Butlerian' attitudes could with equal propriety be termed "Humean". The criticism, if it does anything, would bolster emotivism and would appear to be a reinforcement of the Humean dictum that "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions."² I shall continue, then, to accept Stevenson's distinction, using, for the sake of simplicity, his words "beliefs" and "attitudes", while allowing that one might also use the terms "cognitive attitude" and "emotive attitude" for the same distinction. When considering Mrs. Warnock's general criticism against the assumption that a distinction might be made between 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' language, I said that, for Stevenson, the relationship between these uses of language and 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' is inextricable. I shall thus continue to assume that a distinction may be maintained between these uses of language, while allowing for the possibility that, since language may have such a variety of uses (as Stevenson so often says), it may be possible to suggest other categories of usage, or qualifications to the category within which we classify ethical value judgments. As we shall see in the next two chapters, other analysts

¹John Kemp, "Moral Attitudes and Moral Judgments", in Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. I, 1951, p. 339.

²Above, Ch. I, p. 34; also pp. 22-3.

disagree with Stevenson on just this point, although they are in general agreement with his distinction between evaluative and descriptive uses of language. Similarly, however many similarities there may be between language as used to express ethical value judgments and language as used to express beliefs, I am unconvinced by the suggestion that it is not possible to distinguish between them.

After concluding that, for practical purposes, we may maintain the distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', Stevenson returns to the "central problem", to ask "how people agree or disagree in cases that are typical of normative ethics". His main concern will be to reinforce his preliminary distinction that in any analysis of ethical problems one must consider disagreement both in 'beliefs' and 'attitudes'. Thus he is critical of past theories which may have emphasized one side of the dichotomy to the neglect of the other.

As it happens, the neglect has tended to be one-sided. Most writers, he says, have "tended implicitly to emphasize agreement and disagreement in belief, leaving agreement and disagreement in attitude unmentioned."¹ One immediately thinks of the more obvious cognitivist moral philosophers who "permit ethics to have nothing to do with attitudes," who say or assume that ethical statements are synthetic a priori propositions which may be judged, like scientific statements, in terms of the categories of truth and falsehood, or who say that ethical judgments are matters of intellectual intuition. But we would be wrong, Stevenson points out, if we thought only of such philosophers. Although it is not so obvious, some theories which have "given attitudes a pre-eminent place", also stress agreement and disagreement in belief, neglecting agreement and disagreement in attitude. Stevenson would have

¹EL, p. 8.

to say that both Hume and Ayer, despite being emotivists, have nevertheless emphasized disagreement in belief to the neglect of disagreement in attitude. This is apparent in their assumptions about the nature of ethical disagreement when one considers what they say about the practice of normative ethics.

Although Stevenson does allow that Hume "perhaps" had "half-utilized the conception" of disagreement in attitude,¹ he nevertheless emphasized disagreement in belief. This emphasis, Stevenson points out, is apparent in the following passage from An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals:

"The hypothesis which we embrace is plain. It maintains that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to the spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary. We then proceed to examine a plain matter of fact, to wit, what actions have this influence. We consider all the circumstances in which these actions agree, and thence endeavour to extract some general observations with regard to these sentiments. If you call this metaphysics, and find anything abstruse here, you need only conclude that your turn of mind is not suited to the moral sciences."²

In this passage, as in passages from the Treatise, Hume obviously does allow for disagreements within ethical situations, but, as I have mentioned when discussing his theory,³ he is insistent that when we do disagree in this way we are concerned exclusively with matters of 'fact' and not 'right'. While Stevenson would agree, as we shall see more clearly later, that ethical argument deals with 'facts' or 'beliefs', the point he is making here is that Hume is assuming that the definition of ethical terms may be left entirely to the social scientist. This is to neglect the fact that there is a use, or 'meaning', of ethical terms or statements which may be said to be 'extra-scientific' or 'non-

¹EL, pp. 11 & 275. ²Enquiry, p. 289, Cf., EL, p. 273.
³Cf. above, Ch. I, pp. 52-5.

naturalistic'. This is not unexpected in Hume, however, for, unlike his followers today, he had hoped, as we recall, to make philosophy an empirical social science similar in nature to what we now term "sociology" and "psychology".

Ayer similarly would not evade the charge that in what he says about normative ethics, unlike what he has said in his analysis, he has emphasized disagreement in belief to the neglect of disagreement in attitude. This is most apparent in the following passage:

"It appears that ethics, as a branch of knowledge, is nothing more than a department of psychology and sociology."¹

And, as Stevenson has said, for the reasons we have seen, "emphasis on agreement and disagreement in belief is characteristic of any theory that makes normative ethics a branch of psychology."

We may accept, then, that most writers, including emotivists, have tended to neglect what Stevenson has termed "disagreement in attitude" as being of importance in normative ethics. I have stressed the phrase, "in normative ethics", since, as I have suggested, it cannot be said that past emotivists (unlike most cognitivists) have neglected 'disagreement in attitude' in their writings. Disagreement in attitude is of course important to Hume and Ayer, but, as analysts, they accept it as an ultimate fact, as it were, about which little can be said beyond recognizing that we react differently to different situations. Hume clearly made this point in the passage to which I have already referred:

"Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason."²

¹LTL, 112; cf., Schlick, Problems of Ethics, p. 28.
²Hume, Treatise, p. 458; cf., above Ch. I, p. 39.

Ayer says much the same thing in a passage following one in which he had said that there can be no argument over "pure questions of value."

"Given that a man has certain moral principles," Ayer wrote, "we argue that he must, in order to be consistent, react morally to certain things in a certain way. What we do not and cannot argue about is the validity of these moral principles. We merely praise or condemn them in the light of our own feelings."¹

If Stevenson wishes to modify these views, we should expect, then, as I have said earlier, that he will clearly indicate that in normative ethics not only must we recognize that there is disagreement in attitude, as well as in belief, but also that disputants involved in ethical disagreement may be said to have 'meaningful' procedures to 'prove' or 'support' their ethical value judgments. We must assess whether or not he is successful in this when we consider his two patterns of analysis of ethical statements.

Having made his distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', and having pointed out that most writers have tended to neglect disagreement in attitude, Stevenson offers a synopsis of his preliminary distinctions. This synopsis may serve, also, as a 'signpost' to indicate his general approach in his analysis of ethical statements.

"When ethical issues become controversial, they involve disagreement that is of a dual nature. There is almost inevitably disagreement in belief, which requires detailed sensitive attention; but there is also disagreement in attitude. An analysis which seeks a full picture of ethics, in touch with practice, must be careful to recognize both factors, neither emphasizing the former to the exclusion of the latter, nor the latter to the exclusion of the former. Only by this means can it reveal the varied functions of the ethical terms, and make clear how the methods of ethics compare with those of the natural sciences. Only by this means, indeed, can it envisage its proper task; for the central problem of ethical analysis--one might say 'the' problem--is one of showing in detail how beliefs and attitudes are related."²

¹Ayer, LTL, pp. 111-112.

²EL, p. 11.

After emphasizing the importance of 'attitudes', however, as well as of 'beliefs', Stevenson is obviously concerned that he should not be misunderstood. Far from detracting from any concern for 'beliefs', he says that "potentially, any belief has a bearing on ethics...." Later, in the same context, he adds that "beliefs may be relevant throughout the whole structure of ethics, and...any effort to minimize their variety can only result in grievous over-simplifications."¹ Then he adds that "beliefs are the guides to attitudes," since 'beliefs' are the stimuli to which 'attitudes' are the responses. But lest it be thought that he is over-stressing 'beliefs' he says that "disagreement in attitude is the factor which gives...(ethical) argument its fundamental unity and motivation."²

"In the first place," he continues, "it determines what beliefs will relevantly be discussed or tested; for only those beliefs which are likely to have a bearing on either party's attitudes will be a propos. Any others, however interesting they may be in themselves, will be foreign to the ethical point in question. In the second place, it determines when the argument will terminate."³

In the example cited by Stevenson, when the disputants come to the point of agreeing in 'attitude' the ethical issue is brought to an end. Both 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' are thus important in his theory, and his concern will be to study them "in their intimate relationship."

Stevenson's "patterns of analysis" of ethical language and methodology are dependent on his theory of psychological and pragmatic meaning; and, as I have said earlier, to understand his analysis it is necessary to understand his views about the relationship of the two species of meaning (i.e. emotive and descriptive meaning). Now since he has said that a single term may serve both a 'descriptive' and an 'emotive' purpose at one and the same time, he thus says that "a sign may have

¹EL, p. 12.

²EL, p. 14.

³EL, p. 14.

both kinds of meaning." But we must not assume that these species are isolated, for, as he says, "there is a continual interplay"¹ between them.

"It may happen," he continues, "...that a word acquires a laudatory emotive meaning partly because it refers, via its descriptive meaning, to something which people favour. 'Democracy' has a pleasing emotive meaning to most Americans because its referent pleases them. But if the two sorts of meaning often grow up together, it does not follow that they must always change together. Either may come to vary while the other remains roughly constant."

Gradually, for example, a group of people might "come to disapprove of certain aspects of democracy, but continue to approve other aspects." Thus, while the descriptive meaning of "democracy" might remain unchanged, the emotive meaning will become "less laudatory". On the other hand, the group "might keep the strong laudatory meaning unchanged, and let 'democracy' acquire a descriptive sense which made reference only to those aspects of democracy (in the older sense) which they favoured." Since this is possible, we must not assume that simply because there is a change in the descriptive meaning of a sign there will necessarily be a parallel change in the emotive meaning. "Through inertia," he writes, the emotive meaning "will survive a change in the descriptive meaning on which it originally depended." This is easily explained, he suggests, in view of the fact that the emotive meaning of a sign, like its descriptive meaning, is "developed" through "an elaborate process of conditioning which has attended the sign's use in communication;"² and included in this conditioning process, he says elsewhere, are "gestures, intonations, and emotionally vigorous contexts with which the term has previously been associated...."³ Thus, he continues, "it is easy to see why emotive meaning can often survive quite sharp changes in descriptive meaning."

The 'inertia' of emotive meaning is important to Stevenson's

¹EL, p. 71.

²EL, p. 57.

³EL, p. 72.

analysis, thus he introduces the following terminology:

"To whatever extent emotive meaning is not a function of descriptive meaning, but either persists without the latter or survives changes in it, let us say it is 'independent'. Thus non-metaphorical interjections will have a wholly independent emotive meaning, but most words, including 'democracy', 'liberty', 'magnanimity', and so on, will have an emotive meaning which is independent only in part. On the other hand, to whatever extent emotive meaning is a function of descriptive meaning, changing with it after only a brief 'lag', let us say that it is 'dependent'."¹

There is another category of relationships between descriptive meaning and emotive meaning which he terms "quasi-dependent". There are occasions, for example, when a statement may have a confused descriptive meaning, and the emotive meaning may be dependent primarily on the confusion.

"Once the confusion is dispelled, the emotive meaning greatly decreases."²

The problem is that some terms may suggest more than they descriptively mean, and as in the case of a confused statement, the emotive meaning is a 'function' of the 'suggestiveness' of such terms. As he later expresses this, "much of the emotive meaning may...be quasi-dependent, eliciting the hearer's favour not by definitely designating qualities that he admires, but simply by calling them to mind in a vague way."³

Before leaving his introductory explanation of the relationships of emotive and descriptive meaning, Stevenson once more warns against any temptation to hypostatize terms.

"Emotive and descriptive meaning, both in their origin and practical operation, stand in extremely close relationship. They are distinguishable aspects of a total situation, not 'parts' of it that can be studied in isolation."⁴

Section 2

In undertaking his analysis of ethical terms and ethical methodology,

¹EL, p. 73.
⁴EL, p. 76.

²EL, pp. 78-79.

³EL, p. 87.

Stevenson sets forth his two "patterns of analysis." "Two patterns are required," he writes, "because the ethical terms, as used in everyday life, are vague."¹ It is not simply that they are ambiguous (as the word "grip" ambiguously may mean either a "grasp of the hand" or "a small suitcase"),² but that they are also extremely vague (analogous to the vagueness of the word "red", which calls for an arbitrary decision in using it when referring to those regions of the spectrum where the colour we call "red" shades into other colours). Keeping in mind the relationships of descriptive and emotive meaning, we may appreciate that the word "good" may be given a range of descriptive meanings, and "may be used to mean such qualities as reliable, charitable, honest, and so on, and may even have such a specific reference as that to going faithfully to church on Sundays." There are usages, however, such as in the customary analytic example, "X is good", where the word has no descriptive use beyond that of 'referring to the attitudes of the speaker'. "We have always the choice," he continues, "of making its descriptive meaning rich or poor." And when we recall that there are many ethical terms other than the word "good" (and its customary partners, "bad", "right", and "wrong")--terms such as "charity", "selfishness", "hypocrisy",³ and others, which were largely neglected by moral philosophers before Stevenson and other philosophical analysts pointed out their importance--we are able more clearly to see the wide and varying ranges of the usage of ethical terms.

Considering the possible extremes of the ranges of both the emotive and the descriptive meanings of ethical terms, Stevenson suggests two patterns which would span the extremes. The first pattern will be

¹EL, p. 206.

²EL, p. 34.

³EL, pp. 212-214.

primarily concerned with ethical terms which are extremely vague in their descriptive meaning except in so far as they 'express' the attitudes of the speaker; whereas the second pattern will be concerned with ethical terms which are 'descriptively' rich as compared with first pattern terms. In both patterns, it should be noted, the terms are of primary importance to moral philosophy because of their emotive meaning.

For his first pattern of analysis, he proposes an analysis which, in the order of exposition of his book, he initially postulated among other possible "working models". But in working out his analysis he had to allow that, without fuller understanding of emotive meaning, in its relationship to descriptive meaning, the working models are too crude for their intended purpose. His discussion of meaning, he felt, would help to remedy the deficiencies of the working models as first used, and thus help to "secure an analysis that is sensitive to the nuances and flexibilities of ordinary discourse."¹ Following his necessary excursion into 'meaning' (which I have outlined) he returned, then, to his attempt to provide an analysis of ethical terms and ethical methodology---thus to try to fulfil the two main objects of his work, that is, to "clarify the meaning of ethical terms", and to "characterize the general methods by which ethical judgments can be proved or supported."

The first pattern of analysis as initially proposed, in the chapter entitled, "Working Models", is, then, as follows:

- (1) 'This is wrong' means I disapprove of this; do so as well.
- (2) 'He ought to do this' means I disapprove of his leaving this undone; do so as well.
- (3) 'This is good' means I approve of this; do so as well."²

The 'pattern' in the analyses of these three models of ethical statements

¹EL, p. 81.

²EL, p. 21.

reveals two parts: the first being a 'descriptive' or, as he says, "declarative" statement expressing the 'fact' that the speaker has a feeling of disapproval or approval. Stevenson says that this first part "describes the attitudes of the speaker." The second part, however, is not 'descriptive', but is an imperative statement, "do so as well," which, he says, "is addressed to changing or intensifying the attitudes of the hearer."

The first part of the 'pattern', the 'descriptive' part, goes beyond the analyses of ethical statements proposed by Hume, and by Ayer. As I have argued,¹ Hume, in his analysis of ethical statements (as distinct from his expressions of utilitarianism) may be interpreted as Ayer had explicitly wished to be interpreted. Ayer had written, that is, that "ethical statements are expressions and excitants of feeling which do not necessarily involve any assertions," and "the expression of a feeling assuredly does not always involve the assertion that one has it." Stevenson's analysis departs from this view. A part of the meaning of an ethical statement may be expressed in a descriptive statement which expresses the fact that the speaker has a feeling or attitude of approval or disapproval. (In this first pattern, we recall, the ethical words, "good", and "ought", are not descriptively rich, and indeed are vague, thus the first pattern concentrates only on the descriptive use of ethical terms which 'expresses' the attitude of the speaker).

Ayer had wanted to make a clear distinction between his theory and any 'naturalistic' subjectivist theory which would equate the meaning of an ethical statement with a 'naturalistic' statement, such as the phrase from Stevenson's analysis, "I disapprove of this." But in doing

¹Above, Ch. I, pp. 49-50; and Ch. II, pp. 106 & 115.

this, he need not have rejected the possibility that an ethical statement, while evincing feelings, might also be in part descriptive. Probably his neglect of this possibility is attributable to the fact that he assumed that a term or a statement could serve only one purpose at one time. Thus he appears to take an 'either-or' approach in his analysis; that is, an ethical statement must be considered either as equivalent to a 'naturalistic' statement (for Ayer, at that time, any 'meaningful' statement had to be 'naturalistic') or it must be considered as expressing or evincing a feeling or emotion. Once it is recognized, however, that a single term or statement may have a variety of uses at one and the same time, it then becomes possible to postulate the kind of analysis proposed by Stevenson, without assuming that the primary purpose of an ethical statement need be expressed by a 'naturalistic' or 'descriptive' statement. For Stevenson, as must be apparent, while the 'descriptive' part of an ethical statement is essential (especially, as we shall see, to his claim that ethical statements may be 'proved' or 'supported'), the 'emotive' part is primary in the sense that "the resolution of an ethical argument requires a resolution of disagreement in attitude."¹ I shall return to this first part of the first pattern (with its implied emphasis on the analysis of methods and disagreement in belief) after discussing the second part (with its emphasis on the analysis of meanings and disagreement in attitude). My plan will be to follow through each aspect of the first pattern to its conclusion, before turning to the second pattern of analysis.

The second part of the first pattern of analysis aims primarily at further understanding of disagreement in attitude. Unlike the

¹EL, p. 139.

'descriptive' part, the 'imperative' part is not new to emotivist analyses of ethical statements. Nor is it novel to cognitivist theories. As Hare expresses it, "the greatest of all rationalists, Kant, referred to moral judgments as imperatives."¹ As we have seen, Carnap went so far as to universalize the 'imperative' approach when he said that "a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form."² Ayer, however, would not have agreed. Recognizing that ethical statements are not all alike, Ayer had said that only "some" ethical terms "are used in such a way as to give sentences in which they occur the effect of commands." Now, while recognizing that "there are many differences, unquestionably" between imperatives and ethical statements, Stevenson allows that "there are likewise many similarities;" and the imperative part of the analysis, by using imperative statements as approximate analogues to a part of the overall purpose of ethical statements, aims to provide a better understanding of that part of the function of ethical statements.

"Both imperative and ethical statements," he writes, "are used more for encouraging, altering, or redirecting people's aims and conduct than for simply describing them. Both differ in this respect from the sentences of science. And in arguments that involve disagreement in attitude, it is obvious that imperatives, like ethical judgments, have an important place."³

Stevenson points out that "the imperative function (of ethical statements) is not confined to the imperative mood"; thus it is possible to express that 'function', in his analysis, by means of an indicative mood sentence. The phrase, "This is good," for example, might have been analysed as "I approve of this and I want you to do so as well"; in which case the phrase, "I want you to do so as well" might replace the imperative, "do

¹Hare, The Language of Morals, p. 16.

²Cf., above, Ch. II, pp. 100.

³EL, p. 21.

so as well." While such an analysis is possible, Stevenson says that it is liable to be misleading, primarily because the analysis is expressed entirely in 'belief' statements; and thus there is a danger that 'disagreement in attitude' might be neglected. An imperative statement, on the other hand, "is not open to this misinterpretation". Like Hume and Ayer, Stevenson is concerned, as we have seen, to maintain the distinction between ethical statements and scientific or 'naturalistic' statements, and by means of his 'working model' he is able to point up the distinction. "Ethical statements," he writes, "have a meaning that is approximately, and in part, imperative."¹

Throughout his analysis Stevenson is careful to point out the difficulties of achieving an understanding of ethical language through the medium of language which is primarily used for other purposes; thus, as we have seen, he refers to his working models as being "crude", and helpful only as "rough approximations". Considering the first pattern of analysis, not only do these remarks apply to the overall pattern, but they apply to each part of the pattern considered in terms of the separate but not isolated purposes for which they are intended. The imperative part, which we are now considering, was seen to be inadequate in at least two aspects when Stevenson initially introduced it.

"The first inadequacy of the models is simply this: The imperative component, included to preserve the hortatory aspects of ethical judgments, and stressed as useful in indicating agreement or disagreement in attitude, is really too blunt an instrument to perform its expected task. If a person is explicitly commanded to have a certain attitude, he becomes so self-conscious that he cannot obey. Command a man's approval and you will elicit only superficial symptoms of it. But the judgment, 'This is good,' has no trace of this stultifying effect; so the judgment's² force in encouraging approval has been poorly approximated."

In addition to this deficiency, there is a second one, "somewhat parallel"

¹EL, p. 26.

²EL, p. 32.

to the first, although "more serious".

"Imperatives are often used to exert a unilateral influence. When a man gives direct orders, he may not take too kindly to a dissenting reply."

While Stevenson allows that there may be moralists who would want their ethical pronouncements to be considered in the same manner, there is no doubt that others do not. "There are many men," he writes, "whose influence looks beyond their own immediate needs, and takes its welcome place in a cooperative moral enterprise."

He recognizes that because of these inadequacies the working models (of the first pattern of analysis) may misrepresent "both the manner in which moral influence is exerted and the motives which attend it." He suggests, however, that misrepresentation may be avoided through attending to his psychological or pragmatic theory of meaning. If we recognize, that is, that an ethical term has 'emotive meaning', we are not so liable to assume that the imperative sentence in his proposed analysis characterizes a usage of ethical statements which is exactly like that of commands. He refers to the 'function' of emotive meaning in the following passage:

"In simple forms it is typical of interjections; in more complicated forms it is a contributing factor to poetry; and it has familiar manifestations in the many terms of ordinary discourse that are laudatory or derogatory. In virtue of this kind of meaning, ethical judgments alter attitudes, not by an appeal to self-conscious efforts (as is the case with imperatives), but by the more flexible mechanism of suggestion. Emotive terms present the subject of which they are predicated in a bright or dim light, so to speak, and thereby lead people, rather than command them, to alter their attitudes. And they readily permit a mutual influence of this sort, as distinct from a unilateral one."¹

And as I have noted earlier, he does not ignore the fact that accompanying the use of a word there may be gestures and intonations which help to 'produce' and reinforce the emotive meaning. When using the working

¹EL, p. 33.

models we must, then, appreciate that, without qualification, they 'poorly preserve' the "quasi-imperative function" of ethical terms; thus these terms "must be explained with careful attention to emotive meaning...."¹

The discussion of emotive meaning, however, brought to light a difficulty confronting anyone who would attempt to 'define' the word "good" (or any other ethical term). Such a difficulty is of course not unexpected, since, as we have seen, Moore and others have argued that any theory presuming to have 'defined' the word "good" would commit the 'naturalistic fallacy'. But these philosophers, as Stevenson pointed out, had all emphasized 'disagreement in belief' (and thus 'descriptive meaning') to the neglect of 'disagreement in attitude' (and thus the possibility of 'emotive meaning'). All had assumed that if "good" were to be defined, it would have to be done in terms of 'belief' (or 'descriptive', or 'factual' statements). Now, if disagreement in attitude is not neglected, and if we are to recognize 'emotive meaning', it is reasonable to ask if a new approach to the definition of ethical terms might be successful. The discussion of emotive meaning, however, presents a new difficulty since, as Stevenson says, no definition of an ethical term can "preserve its customary emotive meaning."

"It has no exact emotive equivalent," he writes. "This is a simple fact which should occasion neither surprise nor perplexity. The term is indefinable for the same reasons that 'hurrah' is indefinable. (One need only attempt to interchange 'Hurrah' and 'How exciting!' to see that the terms are only roughly synonymous.) Although our language affords many terms that have the same descriptive meaning, it is more economical with its emotive terms. Each term bears the characteristic stamp of its emotional history."²

Nevertheless, he continues, "it must not be supposed that the emotive meaning of 'good' can receive no further study. One need only 'character-

¹EL, p. 36.

²EL, p. 82.

ize' its meaning, as distinct from defining it." In explaining his use of the word "characterize", he refers to the word "nigger", a word most often used in a contemptuous manner. A dictionary definition of "nigger" could reasonably well provide a descriptive meaning by using the recognized word "Negro" as being a 'descriptive' synonym; but in attempting to provide an emotive meaning, the definition has to use the word "contemptuous", a word which does not 'define' the emotive meaning. Thus he suggests that the word "contemptuous" might be said to 'characterize' the emotive meaning rather than 'define' it.

"Now 'good' may be treated in a parallel fashion. Its descriptive meaning may be defined, though not without the complications of ambiguity and vagueness that will later concern us; but its emotive meaning cannot accurately be preserved in this way, and must be characterized."¹

Having made this distinction, he undertakes to develop a "characterization of the ethical terms...little by little, with constant references to examples...."

This 'characterization' proceeds not only when Stevenson is primarily concerned with 'meaning', but also when he is concerned with 'method', and this is to be remembered when we later discuss the 'descriptive' part of the first pattern of analysis. Within the limitations of this chapter it is needless to follow the details of his 'characterization' of ethical terms; but considering general tendencies in the history of moral philosophy, there are several features of his analysis of 'meaning' which should be noted.

We have already seen that while he is concerned to reject 'naturalistic' theories of moral philosophy, he is very much concerned to say as much as he possibly can about the 'non-naturalistic' or 'extra-scientific'

¹Ibid.

function of ethical terms. Unlike most 'non-naturalists', however, he refuses to "surround ethical judgments with other-worldly mystery";¹ and yet, unlike Ayer, he wishes to try to 'characterize' the non-naturalistic 'function'. His theory of emotive meaning and his two patterns of analysis are of course his means.

There is another point in his treatment of 'meaning' which should be noted in view of the amount of attention it has received in the history of moral philosophy. He tosses cold water, so to speak, on all those who have engaged in the 'teleology versus deontology' controversy.

"Certain theorists are accustomed," he writes, "to make a sharp distinction between 'good' and 'right', as though the terms involved quite disparate problems of analysis."² He does not refer to any specific philosophers, but, we may recall, there have been, on the one hand, teleologists, such as G.E. Moore, who held that "good" is the fundamental ethical concept, and who defined "right" in terms of 'causes' leading to "a good result."³ On the other hand there have been deontologists, such as E.F. Carritt, who wrote that "The Summum Bonum has...been the ignis fatuus of moral philosophy",⁴ and who, in stressing self-evident 'duties', held that the terms "right" and "wrong" were fundamental. Stevenson evinces little feeling for the energies expended in this controversy. He can find "little ground", he says, "either in common usage or elsewhere" for the distinctions made by these writers. "There are slight emotive differences," he allows, "and different ranges of ambiguity for the more specific senses; but that is true of any pair of ethical terms."

"Only one point of difference is conspicuous, and that is not at all profound. Note that it is quite idiomatic to say, 'He is a good man,' or 'That is a good book,' but not at all

¹EL, p. 108.

³Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 147.

⁴Carritt, Theory of Morals, p. 74.

²EL, p. 97.

idiomatic to say, 'He is a right man,' or 'That is a right book.' Thus 'right' is much less suited than 'good' for judging persons or things; and a moment's consideration will show that it is usually reserved for judging people's actions. It is quite idiomatic to say, 'His philanthropic action was morally right.' Now it is difficult to believe that this is anything more than a linguistic nicety, together with a means of giving the adjective 'right', by a limitation of the substantives it can modify, an emotive meaning that makes it influence actions more specifically and directly. In other respects 'right' acts like 'good' (for the first pattern of analysis) in indicating the speaker's favourable attitude, and influencing that of the hearer."¹

In the second pattern, as I have indicated, the ethical terms will be 'descriptively richer', referring beyond the attitudes of the speaker; but this qualification does not affect Stevenson's point.

Any emotivist theory such as Stevenson's must bypass the 'teleology versus deontology' controversy. According to his theory, we begin our analysis on the basis of the fact that we sometimes 'react' or 'respond' primarily to a person or people and that we have adopted the convention of using the word "good" in such situations. On the other hand, we sometimes 'respond' primarily to the action of a person, and we have adopted the convention of using the word "right" in referring to actions. It would appear, however, that traditional deontological and teleological theories have been based on question-begging metaphysical, and naturalistic assumptions, and the claim to either 'rights' or 'goods' as fundamental will ultimately depend on 'intellectual intuitions', or 'naturalistic' claims. This is not to suggest that there is a parallel between deontological and teleological theories, on the one hand, and metaphysical and naturalistic assumptions on the other, for of course the teleological theory I have given as an example (that is, the theory of G.E. Moore), in its reliance on intellectual intuition, may be termed a

¹EL, p. 97.

metaphysical theory. The philosophical analyst will of course wish to avoid postulating either a metaphysical theory or a naturalistic theory. He will not try to plead for one particular definition of a word as being prior or fundamental to others, but will seek to observe and clarify the word in all of its variety of uses. Without saying more than this it is apparent that Stevenson must regard the 'teleology versus deontology' controversy as a Tweedledum-Tweedledee affair.

Apart from expressing agnosticism about metaphysical claims, and apart from questioning naturalism on logical grounds, Stevenson has a further specific argument against any theory which would single out the use of any ethical term as if it were the 'true', 'essential' moral use. As we shall see shortly, all such theories, including teleological and deontological theories, would be guilty of the question-begging procedure of embodying 'persuasive definitions' in their analyses. In short, he points out that there is no way by means of logic alone to select and give priority to one use among the variety of possible uses of an ethical word. Any such selection will involve the making of a value judgment by the writer.

We may now turn to the first, or 'descriptive' part of the first pattern of analysis. In the working models, we recall, this part concerned simply the expression of approval or disapproval of the speaker. The primary concern here is with methodology, and in his treatment of it Stevenson should indicate in what way ethical statements may be 'proved' or 'supported'. The question which Stevenson puts to himself is this: "When people argue about evaluative matters, by what sort of reasoning can they hope to reach agreement?"¹

¹EL, p. 26.

In treating the 'descriptive' part of the first pattern we are to remember that it, like the 'imperative' part, has inadequacies which are especially obvious when we consider the pattern at the "working models" stage. The first and most serious inadequacy is of course that the first pattern is primarily concerned with extremely vague ethical terms, such as "good", "ought", and "wrong", which are 'descriptively poor' as compared with terms such as "charity", "hypocrisy", and "selfishness". Thus the descriptive part of the first pattern emphasizes the 'descriptive' or 'declarative' statement which expresses the fact that the speaker has attitudes of approval or disapproval. This would appear to be a serious deficiency since it would limit discussion of the 'beliefs' which may alter 'attitudes'. In his treatment of the working models, however, Stevenson writes in general terms of the method of 'supporting' or 'proving' ethical judgments; and, since the first pattern is, as he says, "simply an extension of the working models,"¹ it is useful to follow him in the earlier chapter. Although we are promised that this deficiency of emphasis will be made good by the second pattern of analysis, the fundamental points made concerning the proving or 'supporting' of ethical judgments will remain essentially unchanged.²

A second deficiency of the descriptive part of the first pattern is that descriptive statements, "if taken alone,...hint too much at a bare description of attitudes (and)...do not evidence the contagion of warmly expressed approval...."³ But this inadequacy, like that of the imperative part of the first pattern, is to be made good by Stevenson's treatment of emotive meaning; and the summary statement we have seen earlier⁴ indicates in what way emotive meaning may serve as a corrective.

¹EL, p. 89.
³EL, p. 22.

²Cf., EL, p. 134 ff.
⁴Cf., above, p. 152.

With these qualifications in mind, we may turn to his attempts to fulfil the second 'object' of his book, that is, "to characterize the general methods by which ethical judgments can be proved or supported."

If we use the word "proof" in any conventional sense, we must immediately acknowledge that an ethical statement cannot be 'proved' or 'verified'. The working models, while suggesting an analysis different from any previous analyses, are of no help. If we take as an example the model for the statement "This is good" we may see the problem. While the 'descriptive' part, "I approve of this", may be confirmed or refuted (by either introspective or behaviouristic means), there is difficulty with the 'imperative' part, "do so as well". As Stevenson says, the very request for a 'proof' of an imperative is nonsensical. But the problem occurs, he suggests, "only because we have tacitly assumed that a proof in ethics must be exactly like a proof in science."

"The possibility that ethical judgments may have a different sort of proof has not been considered. Or rather, since 'proof' may be a misleading term, let us put it this way: It has yet to be considered whether there is some 'substitute for a proof' in ethics, some support or reasoned argument which, although different from a proof in science, will be equally serviceable in removing the hesitations that usually prompt people to ask for a proof."¹

Stevenson searches, then, for an "analogue to proof", and in so doing he asks if there is any sense in which it may be said that imperatives may be 'supported'; and he readily concludes that there is. Although it would be nonsensical to respond to an imperative with the retort, "Prove it", it would not be nonsensical to ask "Why?", and the question, "why?", he says, asks for a "reason".

"For instance: If told to close the door, one may ask 'Why?' and receive some such reason as 'It is too drafty,' or 'The noise is distracting.'"

¹EL, p. 27.

The 'reasons', we note, are expressed in 'descriptive' or 'belief' statements. He then goes on to indicate his convention for using the word "reason".

"These reasons cannot be called 'proofs' in any but a dangerously extended sense, nor are they demonstratively or inductively related to an imperative; but they manifestly do support an imperative. They 'back it up', or 'establish it', or 'base it on concrete references to fact'. And they are analogous to proofs in that they may remove the doubts or hesitations that prevent the imperative from being accepted."

His next passage is of fundamental importance for an understanding of his analysis of methodology.

"The way in which the reasons support the imperative is simply this: The imperative is used to alter the hearer's attitudes or actions. In asking 'Why?' the hearer indicates his hesitancy to comply. He will not do it 'just because he is told to'. The supporting reason then describes the situation which the imperative seeks to alter, or the new situation which the imperative seeks to bring about; and if these facts disclose that the new situation will satisfy a preponderance of the hearer's desires, he will hesitate to obey no longer. More generally, reasons support imperatives by altering such beliefs as may in turn alter an unwillingness to obey."

In saying this he is returning to one of his preliminary distinctions; that is, that "our beliefs often affect our attitudes; for we may alter our form of approval of something when we change our beliefs about its nature...."¹

"The 'substitute proofs' or 'supporting reasons' that we have been seeking can thus be recognized as familiar acquaintances under a new name: they are the expressions of belief that so often play an important, if indirect, role in situations that involve disagreement in attitude."²

Since there is no 'logical' or 'necessary' relationship between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', there can ultimately, be no 'logical' or 'necessary' relationship between 'supporting reasons' and the ethical judgments they 'support'. Speaking of such 'supporting reasons' during

¹Cf., above, p. 124.

²EL, p. 28.

his treatment of the first pattern of analysis, Stevenson elaborates on this point.

"Subject to some exceptions that will be noted as we proceed, they (that is, the supporting reasons) are related to the judgment psychologically rather than logically. They do not strictly imply the judgment in the way that axioms imply theorems; nor are they related to the judgment inductively, as statements describing observations are related to scientific laws. Rather, they support the judgment in the way that reasons support imperatives. They serve to intensify and render more permanent the influence upon attitudes which emotive meaning can often do no more than begin. This is possible whenever attitudes are functions of beliefs."¹

In view of the lack of any necessary relationship between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes', Stevenson is aware of the possibility that his theory, like other emotivist theories, might be accused of "building morality on shifting sands." In view of what he has said, however, about the "inertia" of emotive meaning, and the "dependent" and "quasi-dependent" relationships between emotive meaning and descriptive meaning, it can hardly be said that his analysis indicates that ethical 'attitudes' are any less (or more) 'stable' than practices in normative ethics. He readily acknowledges that his account of methodology "will fail to content the great number of theorists who are embarked on 'the quest for certainty'." His analysis does not allow for any guarantee that ethical disagreement might be resolved. In writing the following passage Stevenson is expressing a view which is typical of the views of Hume and Ayer.

"Persons who make opposed ethical judgements may (so far as theoretical possibility is concerned) continue to do so in the face of all manner of reasons that their argument includes, even though neither makes any logical or empirical error."²

Of course, one might add, there is no guarantee in the practice of normative ethics, that any disagreement might be resolved; and the demand for an analysis in moral philosophy that would suggest that there must be a

¹EL, p. 113.

²EL, pp. 30-31.

definite method for resolving ethical disagreements is possibly a case of wishful thinking. Stevenson is unwilling to accept the dictum, "Matters of taste are not to be disputed," since he believes it is too limited in the practice of normative ethics, although it may be of use in questions of the palate.¹ Nevertheless, he would have to allow that, ultimately, after considerable argument, there may be a point at which it may be said, if not "everyone to his own taste", at least "everyone to his own attitude."

This, in brief, is what Stevenson has to say about methodology when discussing it at the "working models" stage of the first pattern of analysis. After considering what further qualifications he makes concerning methodology in the remainder of his treatment of the first pattern of analysis, I shall compare this approach with that of Hume and Ayer. Apart from differences in linguistic conventions, the theories seem very similar. In the Treatise, for example, Hume had said that "reasoning takes place to discover this relation (that is, between 'objects' which 'cause' pleasure and pain); and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation";² and, in the Enquiry, he said that "much reasoning" is necessary "to pave the way" for a moral 'sentiment'.³ In what sense, then, does Stevenson's first pattern of analysis differ? We must return to this point after considering the main details of his treatment of methodology.

In his examination of "rational methods" used in ethical arguments, Stevenson classifies four main groups. In view of the distinctions which he has made at the 'working models' stage, and in view of what he has said about 'meaning', he gives a "general outline of first-pattern

¹EL, p. 111.
³Enquiry, p. 173.

²Treatise, p. 414.

methodology" which will be assumed throughout his treatment.

"Any statement about any matter of fact which any speaker considers likely to alter attitudes may be adduced as a reason for or against an ethical judgment. Whether this reason will in fact support or oppose the judgment will depend on whether the hearer believes it, and upon whether, if he does, it will actually make a difference to his attitudes; but it may conveniently be called a reason (though not necessarily a 'valid' one) regardless of whether it is accepted or not."¹

In Group I he cites examples to "illustrate some of the ways in which ethical methods resemble factual ones."

"They present exceptions to the rough but useful rule mentioned previously---the rule that ethical judgments are supported or attacked by reasons related to them psychologically, rather than logically."

These exceptions are of course important to note since they would call for a modification of earlier views about 'Hume's gap' between factual statements and value judgments. As we have seen, Ayer had followed Hume in insisting that there could be no 'logical bridge' whatever between factual statements and value judgments. Stevenson, then, would qualify this view. In recognizing that words and statements may have both 'descriptive meaning' and 'emotive meaning' at one and the same time, he is able to establish a 'logical bridge' between the 'descriptive meaning' of a factual statement and the 'descriptive meaning' of a value judgment. "In general", he writes, "ethical statements, like all others that have at least some descriptive meaning, are amenable to the usual applications of formal logic."² In three of the four examples in Group I Stevenson cites cases in which a speaker is shown to be advocating views which are formally inconsistent with other statements he has made or might make. The first of his examples clearly establishes his point:

"A: It would be a good thing to have a dole for the unemployed.

¹EL, pp. 114-115.

²EL, p. 116.

B: But you have just said that a dole would weaken people's sense of independence, and you have admitted that nothing which has that consequence is good."

In this instance, as in the second example, B's reply is "an empirical assertion", but in indicating that A has made a statement which is formally inconsistent with a previous statement, B's statement thus contradicts A's judgment. What Stevenson says about the second example may equally apply to the first. "A must, in the interest of consistency," he writes, "either reject B's assertion, or give up his ethical judgment".

In the fourth example of this group speaker B challenges A for making an ethical judgment which is a generalization from 'some' to 'all' of a particular group. In defence of his generalization, A indicates that he knows "a great number" of the group in question, and he thus tries to support his initial judgment. In this example Stevenson points out "how closely an ethical argument can approximate to ordinary induction." The essential difference, however, is that each particular ethical judgment, "unlike observation-sentences in science", is open to disagreement in attitude. Thus, as Stevenson argues, "there is no use of induction in ethics that can secure agreement in attitude in the same direct way that it can secure agreement in belief."¹

In these examples of Group I there is an obvious logical relationship between the statements of speakers A and B, and thus the examples do represent exceptions to the "rough but useful rule...that ethical judgments are supported or attacked by reasons related to them psychologically rather than logically." It should be noted, however, that a statement which points out a formal contradiction in a person's ethical judgments is not to be taken as a 'reason' for one or the other of the

¹EL, p. 118.

judgments. Although it is a 'reason' for making the judgments consistent, "the speaker need give up only one of the judgments, formal logic being unable to determine which."¹ The statement which serves to reveal a formal contradiction is not, then, a 'proof' of any particular value judgment, but it is rather "an indefinite disproof".² By itself it cannot 'prove' or 'support' a particular value judgment. Although, for the sake of logical consistency, ethical judgments which we make should not be contradictory, "judgments which are consistent may nonetheless be rejected." Ultimately, then, (as he indicates in a footnote to page 134) we are directed back to the generalization he had made earlier, that "supporting reasons...have no sort of logical compulsion."³ And in the later passage we have been considering he writes the following:

"In short, formal logic can provide necessary conditions to the rational acceptance of normatively interesting ethical judgments, but not sufficient ones."⁴

Despite his establishing a partial 'logical bridge' (over 'Hume's gap') between factual statements and value judgments, there is, then, a further 'gap' which remains to be bridged. Keeping in mind the qualifications he has made he may, then, be interpreted as saying that, finally and fundamentally, supporting reasons are related to particular value judgments psychologically and not logically.

In the remaining three groups in his chapter "First Pattern: Method", the "rough but useful" rule is applied without qualification. Unlike some of the examples in Group I, the examples of the remaining groups do not illustrate challenges to a speaker's 'description' of his 'attitudes'. In these examples, that is, the assumption is that he is correctly 'describing' his 'attitude', and the emphasis is on the

¹EL, p. 134.
³EL, p. 30.

²Ibid.
⁴EL, p. 135.

endeavour to alter or strengthen the attitude by means of altering his beliefs. In Group II, for example, the emphasis is on altering attitudes by means of altering beliefs about the "nature", or "consequences" of that which is to be judged. Stevenson gives the following example of an argument concerned with the "nature" of that which is judged:

- "A: The proposed tax bill is on the whole very bad.
B: I know little about it, but have been inclined to favour it on the ground that higher taxes are preferable to further borrowing.
A: It provides for a sales-tax on a number of necessities, and reduces income-tax exemption to an incredibly low figure.
B: I had not realized that. I must study the bill, and perhaps I shall agree with you in opposing it."

In Group III the examples concern "motives" of actions, and the "origin" of attitudes; and in one of the examples a speaker tries to alter the 'attitude' of another by pointing up motives which apparently underlay the action under judgment. And in Group IV the method of argument is "less concerned with resolving disagreement in attitude than with temporarily evading the force of a disconcerting influence, or altering the means by which it is exerted."¹ The following example will illustrate Stevenson's point:

- "A: You are much too hard on your employees.
B: But you, certainly, are not the one to say so. Your own factory would bear investigation far less easily than mine."

In these three groups, as I have mentioned, there is no logical relation whatever between the factual statements which challenge the value statements.

In the introductory paragraph of his next chapter, "Persuasion", Stevenson summarizes the conclusions he has arrived at in his analysis of the four types of "rational methods" we have been considering.

¹EL, p. 127.

"We have seen that the rational methods used in normative ethics may lack finality, even in theory. That they are not final in practice, amid the complexities of applying them, is evident on every hand."¹

This statement is of course a clear indication of the suggestion that despite his allowing that there may be a logical relation between factual statements and value judgments, finally and fundamentally, there is a 'gap' between factual statements and particular value judgments which cannot be bridged by logic.

"What recourse is there, then," he continues, "for one who despairs of a reasoned solution? Must he be content with a continued disagreement, or may he support his ethical position in some other way?"

In his analysis of "rational methods" to resolve ethical disagreement he was concerned, as we have seen, with arguments which seek to change or redirect attitudes by changing beliefs:

"But," he writes, "there are other ways of altering a man's attitudes---ways that are not mediated by reasons which change beliefs. Like all psychological phenomena, attitudes are the outcome of many determining factors, and beliefs figure as but one set of factors among others. To the extent that the other factors are subject to control in the course of an argument, and so may contribute to changes in a man's attitudes, they both can be and are used as a means of securing ethical agreement. Such procedures constitute the 'nonrational methods' of ethics...."²

"The most important of the nonrational methods," he continues, "will be called 'persuasive', in a somewhat broadened sense." (This phrase, "in a somewhat broadened sense", is to be noted, since when Hare and Nowell-Smith criticize the 'persuasive theory' they will be seen to use the word "persuasive" in a narrow sense). Stevenson describes the 'persuasive method' of ethical argument in the following passage:

"It depends on the sheer, direct emotional impact of words---on emotive meaning, rhetorical cadence, apt metaphor, stentorian, stimulating, or pleading tones of voice, dramatic gestures, care in establishing rapproch with the hearer or audience,

¹EL, p. 139.

²EL, p. 139.

and so on. Any ethical judgment, of course, is itself a persuasive instrument; but in the use of persuasive 'methods' the effects of an initial judgment are intensified by further persuasion. A redirection of the hearer's attitudes is sought not by the mediating step of altering his beliefs, but by exhortation, whether obvious or subtle, crude or refined."¹

As Stevenson says, "a study of persuasive methods is...largely a study of the emotive use of words, and hence subject to implicit treatment throughout the whole" of his work. One example of a persuasive argument will be sufficient to illustrate what he means.

"A: It is morally wrong for you to disobey him.

B: That is precisely what I have been denying.

A: But it is your simple duty to obey. You ought to obey him in the sheer interest of moral obligation."²

In any such argument the statements will have of course descriptive meaning as well as emotive meaning. Stevenson points out, in fact, that "purely persuasive methods are seldom found...for there are very few words which have an emotive meaning only."³ Nevertheless, if a method of argument is used which relies on means "that go beyond the mediation of articulate beliefs",⁴ it is to that extent "persuasive".

In his analysis of the four "rational methods" and the main "non-rational method" of ethical argument, Stevenson says nothing that would significantly alter what he had said at the 'working models' stage. And as he allows when he introduces his second pattern of analysis, he has nothing to add which will alter what he has said earlier about "the possibility or impossibility of reaching ethical agreement."⁵ Thus, as he had said earlier, "unless some further method can be found, a reasoned argument in ethics is theoretically possible only to the extent that agreement in belief will cause people to agree in attitude."⁶

¹EL, pp. 139-140.
⁴EL, p. 144.

²EL, p. 141.
⁵EL, p. 209.

³Ibid.
⁶EL, p. 31.

While he suggests, then, that his analysis does not indicate that there is at present a definitive method for resolving disagreements in normative ethics, he makes no claims that his indefinite analysis is definitive. In the quotation concluding the preceding paragraph we may note that he qualifies his claims with the phrase "unless some further method can be found." The statement is even further qualified, however, in the use of the phrase "only to the extent that". If we could remove this latter qualification, and could say that there is always a definite relationship between disagreement in attitudes and some beliefs, then we could say that a reasoned agreement in ethics is theoretically possible.

Stevenson considers this possibility. "...Granted an assumption," he writes "one may hope that ethical agreement can be obtained."¹ The assumption in question is: "All disagreement in attitude is rooted in disagreement in belief." This assumption, he acknowledges, is in turn based on the assumption that "rational methods...are sufficient to bring about agreement in belief." In view of the amount of attention given in writings in the philosophy of science to problems concerning 'meaning', 'verification', and 'testability', we may wonder why Stevenson would have given his psychological assumption any further consideration. But, at this point, he becomes something of a moralist despite himself. After acknowledging that his psychological assumption rests on the scientific assumption, he proceeds to write the following statement: "but even so one may hope, granted the assumption, that the growth of empirical knowledge will slowly lead to a world of enlightened moral accord." He thus urges the assumption as a 'working hypothesis' which may serve as a basis towards the fulfillment of his moralistic hope for a better world.

¹EL, p. 136.

Typical of his usual careful temperament, he warns us, however, that the assumption "must be used with caution." Referring to the similar sociological or psychological generalization which Hume used in support of his utilitarianism, he grants that any such assumption is "problematical... even when it is less sweeping than this one must inevitably be." There are obvious cases for which the assumption does hold, he writes, but "other cases may be of a different sort."

"Some ethical disagreements seem rooted, rather in the scarcity of what people want. Several nations may urge that their crowded and suffering populations give them the right to take a disputed territory. Others seem rooted in temperamental differences, as when an oversexed, emotionally independent adolescent argues with an undersexed, emotionally dependent one about the desirability of free love. In these cases the growth of science may, for all that we can know, leave ethical disagreement permanently unresolved."¹

While such disagreements may seem not to be rooted in belief, there is the possibility, he suggests, that they are. He allows that there is no present possibility of testing the assumption, thus "any assurance that may attend the assumption must be tempered by a scientific caution". And he again resorts to persuasive, moralistic tactics to urge that the assumption not be rejected out of hand.

"There can be no assurance that it will not hold in any given case, and its adoption may be beneficial in prolonging the enlightenment of discussion. One may even cling to it in desperation, as the only hope of settling issues that may otherwise lead to serious discord."²

Lest it be thought that the assumption is "fantastic" in implying that "all individual differences in temperament are a product of ignorance, and that the growth of science would make man behave with monotonous similarity," Stevenson points out that ethical agreement is in fact possible between people of different temperaments who lead different

¹EL, pp. 136-7.

²EL, p. 137.

kinds of lives. In concluding his statement about the assumption he writes the following passage:

"Yet an assumption that is not fantastic may nevertheless be false, nor have we any trustworthy assurance that it is true. Our conclusions about the finality of rational methods in ethics must accordingly be hypothetical:

If any ethical dispute is rooted in disagreement in belief, it may be settled by reasoning and inquiry to whatever extent the beliefs may be settled. But if any ethical dispute is not rooted in disagreement in belief, then no reasoned solution of any sort is possible."¹

This, then, is Stevenson's general conclusion to the question posed by the second main object of his book: "to characterize the general methods by which ethical judgments can be proved or supported." Before discussing it I should like to point out that Stevenson's treatment of it is inconsistent with the role of the philosophical analyst---a role which he purports to follow. While he tells us elsewhere in the book that his work "does not confine one, after clarity is obtained, to a passive or cynical neutrality,"² he also maintains in the same context that analysis "must retain that difficult detachment which studies ethical judgments without making them." In another context, while admitting that analysis "cannot pretend to sever its studies from all evaluation whatsoever", the evaluations which he is prepared to allow are those which are concerned with "marking off...(a) field of study", and are not "peculiarly 'moral' ones", as the ones here in question are. As I have suggested, in his urging that the assumption be taken for granted by disputants in normative ethics, he is going beyond the role of the analyst, and, in fact, is something of a moralist. His task as an analyst, as he says, "is concerned with observing and clarifying, as distinct from judging,"³ and if in normative ethics all people do in fact act as if

¹EL, p. 138.
³EL, p. 160, see also p. 222.

²EL, p. 110.

they held the assumption that "all disagreement in attitude is rooted in disagreement in belief" (an impossible 'fact' to ascertain at least at present, as Stevenson admits), then, as an analyst, he should simply acknowledge this. But as an analyst his role is not to suggest that the "adoption" of the assumption "may be beneficial in prolonging the enlightenment of discussion," or that "one may cling to it in desperation, as the only hope of settling issues that may otherwise lead to serious discord." Further evidence that he is in this instance moralising is that, in advocating the adoption of the assumption, for the reasons he has given, he could only be addressing his recommendation to disputants involved in an ethical or evaluative dispute. It would be pointless to make such a recommendation to other philosophical analysts qua philosophical analysts---although it seems pointless, also, to recommend the results of the analysis of normative ethics to disputants who provide the data to analyse. Stevenson suggested that, if his analysis is accurate, the methods used in some (perhaps most) ethical disagreements may, in fact, be based on the assumption that "disagreement in attitude is rooted in disagreement in belief," while, on the other hand, in some cases of ethical disagreement, the disagreements in attitude seem fundamental (such as in the examples of want based on scarcity, or in the temperamental differences of the adolescents). This, I believe, is as far as his analysis could justifiably take him.¹

Considering the first pattern of analysis, what may be said in general of Stevenson's aim "to characterize the general methods by which ethical judgments can be proved or supported"? In what sense is his theory, to this point, different from the emotivist theories of Hume

¹There are other 'persuasive' lapses which I shall mention later.

and Ayer?---First, like the earlier emotivists, he agrees that value judgments cannot be 'proved' or 'supported' in the same way in which 'descriptive' or 'scientific' statements may be proved or supported. Often, however, and here Stevenson suggests an innovation to the emotivist theory, ethical judgments may be given "substitute proofs" or "supporting reasons". But, with one type of exception, this particular qualification does not go beyond earlier theories. Although the earlier emotivists (considering Ayer's early version of his theory) would not have said that value judgments could be given "reasons" or "substitute proofs", we may recall that Hume had allowed that "much reasoning" is necessary to "pave the way" for a desired "sentiment", and Ayer had allowed for arguments about the "facts" of the case, about "motives", "consequences", and other circumstances. Recognizing a different linguistic convention (as Ayer does later) we could quite well refer to the 'factual statements' in such reasoning as "reasons". While Stevenson's analysis of methods of argument goes into considerably more detail than the earlier theories, it relies, with the one exception, on the same general rule which Hume and Ayer had assumed. That is, as Stevenson had expressed it, "ethical judgments are supported or attacked by reasons related to them psychologically, rather than logically." There is, however, the one exception; and this exception is based on a further qualification which Stevenson makes to the emotive theory.

The qualification is the later-Wittgenstein doctrine that individual terms and statements may serve different purposes at one and the same time. As Stevenson had expressed this, a term may be considered as serving both a 'descriptive' use and an 'emotive' or 'dynamic' use, or, in other words, may have a 'descriptive meaning' and an 'emotive meaning'. Thus it is possible to establish a 'logical link' between the descriptive

meaning of a factual statement and the descriptive meaning of a value judgment; and thus, as we have seen, Stevenson argues that there may be exceptions to his "rough but useful" rule. A factual statement may therefore be logically related to an ethical judgment in that it indicates a formal contradiction between that judgment and another judgment which the speaker may have made or, in some circumstances, would make. As we have seen, however, Stevenson ultimately allows that there is no "sufficient" relation of logical entailment between a factual statement and a particular value judgment. "Supporting reasons," as he has said, "have no sort of logical compulsion." As he has also said, "the resolution of an ethical argument requires a resolution of disagreement in attitude", and the first pattern, as he readily allows, has not indicated any definite or certain way in which this may be accomplished. We must now ask whether or not the "second pattern of analysis" will provide any more satisfactory solution.

Section 3

The second pattern of analysis, as Stevenson has indicated, is concerned with ethical terms which are 'descriptively richer' than the relatively more vague terms treated by the first pattern. While the first pattern considered the 'descriptive meaning' of ethical terms with reference only to 'expressing' or 'declaring' the speaker's attitudes, the second pattern "will illustrate many other possibilities, allowing the descriptive references of the ethical terms to become as complicated as any occasion or context may require."¹ This is not to suggest that the second pattern will be concerned primarily with descriptive meaning, however, for, as Stevenson says, "in both patterns there is an emphasis

¹EL, p. 89.

on disagreement in attitude." The main difference lies "solely in the added descriptive meaning" that the second pattern provides, "and the complications of methodology that arise as a consequence."¹ The general form of the second pattern is as follows:

"'This is good' has the meaning of 'This has qualities or relations X,Y,Z..., ' except that 'good' has as well a laudatory emotive meaning which permits it to express the speaker's approval, and tends to evoke the approval of the hearer.'"2

We have seen that even the first pattern analysis, simply in recognizing a limited 'descriptive meaning' of ethical terms, has gone beyond the early postulation by Ayer that in an ethical statement "the function of the relevant ethical word is purely 'emotive'." The second pattern extends the degree of that difference. But if one had hoped that the second pattern might have led to any essential modification of the results derived by the first pattern analysis,--if one had hoped, for example, for a more adequate definition of ethical terms or a more adequate method of 'proving' or 'supporting' ethical judgments--Stevenson quickly dampens any such hopes.

"The great variety of meanings which the second pattern recognizes, as compared with the first, and the greater 'content' which it seems to provide, end by making no essential difference to the nature of normative ethics. Ethics becomes neither richer nor poorer by the second pattern, and neither more nor less 'objective'. All the considerations of the first pattern reappear, and the task of analysis is simply to discern them in their new linguistic guise. Perhaps this will not be initially obvious. With increased descriptive meaning, ethical judgments are open to a more direct case of empirical and logical methods, and thus seemingly more amenable to the ordinary considerations of proof and validity. We shall see, however, that this is a wholly unimportant matter, without any results upon the possibility or impossibility of reaching ethical agreement."³

This is not to say, however, that Stevenson's second pattern of analysis is unimportant, for, on the contrary, what he has written on the subject

¹EL, p. 206.

²EL, p. 207.

³EL, p. 209.

of "persuasive definitions" must obviously be of considerable importance in the history of moral philosophy.

This subject is introduced in his chapter concerning the meanings or definitions of ethical words (the chapter is appropriately entitled, "The Second Pattern of Analysis: Persuasive Definitions"). As in the first pattern, his treatment of methodology follows his treatment of meanings. In considering the second pattern we may grant at the outset that, as the first pattern analysis clearly indicated, ethical words are indefinable. Even if it were possible to arrive at acceptable definitions of ethical terms as considered (by logical abstraction) solely in terms of their 'descriptive' usage, it is not possible to 'define' them in terms of their 'extra-scientific' usage---or, as Stevenson would say, in terms of their emotive meaning. The problem of definition is complicated, however, in view of the fact that ethical words are often extremely vague in their descriptive meaning. A difficulty in trying to define vague words is of course that they may be used in different ways by different people. Stevenson expresses this point more emphatically. "...One of the chief functions of vague words," he writes, "is that they can be adapted to this or that specific purpose, as occasion requires."¹ If a word is vague, however, and is in fact used in different ways, it is hardly the analyst's prerogative to opt for one particular usage, or 'definition'.

"It is more important," writes Stevenson, "to understand the flexibilities of common words, and the varieties of meaning they may 'naturally' be assigned, than to insist on some one meaning that they should be given."²

This, then, is the task which Stevenson undertakes by means of his second pattern of analysis. Assuming that the ethical term "good" (or any other

¹EL, p. 208.

²EL, p. 206.

ethical word) may have a variety of descriptive meanings, depending on the variety of contexts in which it is conventionally used, Stevenson regards his second pattern of analysis as a "formal schema" which may serve as an analytic tool to study the word in any of its uses.

Despite the fact that, as we now know, an ethical word, such as "good", is vague in its descriptive meaning, and may be used in a variety of ways, and despite the fact that its 'extra-scientific' use defies definition, many traditional moral philosophers have undertaken to discover the definition of the word of their choice, as if it had a single, 'true', 'essential' meaning. Quoting I.A. Richards with approval, Stevenson has this to say of such an approach: "The 'One-And-Only-One-True-Meaning superstition'...can have serious consequences in any field of enquiry, and in ethics it is fatal to all further advance."¹ Nonetheless, the history of moral philosophy offers many examples of philosophers who have used this approach. Considering their theories in terms of the second pattern, it might be said that such philosophers have argued that the variables (X,Y,Z...) should have a restricted descriptive meaning, and that all other possible variables (or uses) should be rejected. In so doing each philosopher has made a value judgment, thereby begging the question for one among other possible uses of the ethical word in question. Plato is a noteworthy example. Stevenson points out that through the analyses of various uses of the word "justice" in the Republic, Plato rejects all with the exception of one: "Justice of the state consists of each of the three classes doing the work of its own class."² Kant does the same kind of thing when he prescribes the categorical use of the word "good" in his statement that "it is impossible to conceive any-

¹EL, p. 85.

²EL, p. 225.

thing at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will."¹ And Hume, in proposing his utilitarian theory, would have restricted the moral use of the word "good" to that which may be said to be 'useful' and 'agreeable' to others and to oneself.² Nor has this tendency been confined to moral philosophers of earlier centuries. Bradley, Dewey, Moore, Ross, Paton, Ewing, and many others, have all, in their respective ways, assumed that there was a 'One-And-Only-One-True-Meaning' of what they respectively took to be the fundamental ethical term. As Stevenson would express it, all have embodied "persuasive definitions" in their analyses of ethical words.

The basic error made by all of these moral philosophers is that they have assumed that, by means solely of a logical or philosophical analysis, they could select and give priority to one among many possible uses of a particular ethical word. Stevenson's point might be made in the following way. If a person stipulated that when he used the word "good" in a moral context he intended that it should be regarded as being related, for example, to his own 'pleasure', there would be no logical way to show him that he must not use the word in this way. It might be possible to point out that "pleasure" is an extremely vague and ambiguous word, and that it might therefore be difficult for him always to use the word "good" as he stipulated; but simply because of its vagueness and ambiguity it is just as possible that he could use it consistently. If I wished, then, to get him to accept another possibility (for example, the utilitarian definition that "good" is equivalent to "the greatest happiness of the greatest number"), there would be no logically necessary

¹Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, (paton tr.), p. 61.

²Cf., Above, Ch. I, p.47.

relation between my arguments and his acceptance or lack of acceptance of the new definition. If he were ultimately to accept the utilitarian definition it would have been as a result of my redirecting his attitudes through persuading him to accept an altered descriptive meaning of the word "good". An important part of the technique in presenting this 'persuasive definition' is that I rely on the 'inertia' of the emotive meaning of "good". Thus I seek to transfer or redirect my protagonist's 'pro-attitudes' to "good" from his descriptive meaning to mine; and in so doing I rely on the fact that, at the outset, he will have pro-attitudes to my use of the word even while not accepting my descriptive meaning or definition. In presenting the utilitarian 'persuasive definition' of "good", as opposed to the egoistic hedonist theory (or any other theory), I would have had to rely primarily on psychological or persuasive techniques. And so it is with any theory which purports to demonstrate that there is one specific definition of a moral word (whether it be "good", or "right", or any other) which may be considered to be fundamental to all other uses. As Stevenson says, "to choose a definition is to plead a cause, so long as the word defined is strongly emotive."¹

"...when a specially defined sense is singled out and recommended for exclusive use," he writes, "the matter becomes an evaluative one. The definition is persuasive. Those who select a sense as the 'true' sense may exert a deep and important influence as moralists, but they have ceased at that point to be analysts."²

The value of the second pattern of analysis is not only, then, that it reveals the range and complexities of ethical language, but, above all, that it clearly reveals that any prescription of a specific sense of the word "good" (or any other ethical word) is dependent on a "persuasive definition." Thus, as Stevenson says, and as our brief examples have

¹EL, p. 210.

²EL, p. 222.

indicated, it is "often useful as a tool for clarifying and criticising the several trends of ethical theory."¹

Stevenson's treatment of methodology by means of his second pattern does not add significantly to what he has said earlier, except that 'supporting reasons' are considered not only as being used to alter attitudes, as they were in the first pattern, but also to support 'persuasive definitions'. But, as he allows, his "previous conclusions, as developed for the first pattern, can be extended to the second without essential change."²

There is one aspect of his general treatment of methodology, however, which should be noted. As Stevenson acknowledges, "any ethical judgment, of course, is itself a persuasive instrument,"³ and since 'propaganda' relies on persuasive methods, some critics have put "two and two together...without making four." Moved by the word "propaganda", which is most often used derogatively, the critics, he suggests, "become frightened of all emotive words whatever," and regard all persuasion as "bad and shameful, regardless of its motivation and aim." But, in the practice of normative ethics, he points out, "we never have occasion to decide whether to reject all persuasion, or accept it all....Persuasion is sometimes good and sometimes bad, depending upon the circumstances."⁴ The question of deciding between cases of persuasion is, then, a value judgment itself, and it is not for the analyst moralistically to prescribe criteria for sorting out 'good' from 'bad' persuasion, any more than it is his role to prescribe any other value principles. As an analyst he may try to say something about the methods of those whom we conventionally term "moralists" as distinguished from those whom we

¹EL, p. 253.
³EL, pp. 139-140.

²EL, p. 227.
⁴EL, p. 163.

conventionally term "propagandists"; and, in fact, Stevenson makes such an attempt.¹ He has to allow, however, that his definitions for "moralist" and "propagandist" will "perhaps...prove to be persuasive;"² and indeed they are. The very attempt to define them presupposes value judgments distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' persuasion. In the next two chapters we shall consider the possibility that qualifications to this kind of analysis of moral judgments might enable one to make the distinction between the 'moralist' and the 'propagandist' which some critics, including Hare and Nowell-Smith, find desirable. But even if it were not possible to make the distinction there can be no doubt that Stevenson's reply to critics is difficult to discount.

"Persuasion," he writes, "is unquestionably a tool of the 'propagandist' and soap-box orator; but it is also a tool of every altruistic reformer that the world has ever known. We must not banish all doctors to rid the world of quacks."³

Section 4

Concluding the section in which he briefly outlines "the main points of difference" between his "emotive" theory and the kind of theory which had been presented by Ayer in Language, Truth, and Logic, Stevenson cautions his reader that "the difference must not cause us to overlook the similarities."⁴ In sketching these similarities I shall extend the point of comparison back to Hume.

The most obvious similarity is that Stevenson, like Hume and Ayer, has presented an emotivist analysis of ethical terms. Thus, like them, he would reject most of the traditional theories of moral philosophers. An important factor in their rejection of these theories is of course their common empirical temperament. From this they would agree that all

¹Cf. Ch. XI, "Moralists and Propagandists".
²EL, p. 243.

³EL, p. 164.

⁴EL, p. 268.

metaphysical, objectivist, absolutist, intuitionist, and all such theories, are based on assumptions which cannot be supported. But beyond this methodological rejection of cognitivist theories, Stevenson would point out that all have made the error of neglecting attitudes; and, in saying this, he would suggest that, to some extent even Hume and Ayer are guilty of this failing. All three are in agreement, however, that in some sense, the distinctive 'feature' or 'characteristic' or 'use' of ethical statements may appropriately be termed "emotive". Among the several differences within their expressions of the 'emotive' theory, however, is a shift in emphasis in the way they regard the word "emotive". For Hume, and perhaps even more for Ayer, the word was less to be valued than the word "cognitive". The word "emotive", Stevenson writes, is sometimes used "in an extremely rough way, until it labels a wastebasket for the many aspects of linguistic usage that are detrimental or irrelevant to the purposes of science."¹ Stevenson is emphatic that it is in no sense a second-class term, and he "hopes to make clear that 'emotive' need not itself have a derogatory emotive meaning."² His psychological or pragmatic theory of meaning, within which emotive meaning and descriptive meaning are the two co-ordinate species, is one of his principle means to support that hope.

Another similarity, closely related to the preceding one, is that, at least in their analyses of ethical statements, all three emotivists have clearly distinguished between the uses of factual, and value statements. The contemporary emotivists have made the distinction primarily in terms of the uses of language, while Hume's approach was partly analytic and partly that of introspective psychology. The main consequence of

¹EL, p. 76.

²EL, p. 267.

such an approach would be the rejection of all 'naturalistic' or 'scientific' theories of moral philosophy, although Hume had inconsistently aspired to making philosophy a science. With the benefit of the groundbreaking role performed by Hume, and a gradual improvement of analytic techniques, culminating with Moore's exposition of the 'naturalistic fallacy', Ayer and Stevenson have been able to improve upon the reasons for rejecting 'naturalism'. While emotivist Ayer differed from cognitivist Moore (and of course all other cognitivists), there were still some traces of 'cognitivism' in his early theory. This is perhaps suggested in his statement that non-factual, or non-scientific, or non-cognitive statements are 'meaningless'; but it is probably more evident in his saying that normative ethics is a branch of psychology.¹ As Stevenson indicated, there is a danger of inconsistency within an anti-naturalistic theory which postulates that normative ethics may be turned over to the social scientist; and there is clearly an inadequacy within a theory which purports to uphold the autonomy of ethics (as Moore's theory does) and yet does not provide the analytic means to distinguish between value statements and scientific statements.² Neither Hume nor Ayer can be accused of this, even though, as Stevenson suggests, both may be accused to some extent of emphasizing 'beliefs' to the neglect of 'attitudes'.

Stevenson's rejection of 'naturalism', from the basis of the main distinctions of the emotive theory, is more satisfactory than earlier anti-naturalist theories. Stevenson, in effect, displaces 'naturalism' by means of his analysis. Recognizing more clearly than most earlier moral philosophers that language may have a variety of uses, and that words and statements may have a 'meaningful' use in expressing, evoking,

¹Above, p. 141.

²Cf., EL, p. 109.

and altering attitudes, he maintains that any analysis of ethical language and methodology which neglects attitudes is incomplete. Since any naturalistic theory is expressed in terms only of 'beliefs', it may therefore be dismissed. But, further, if we were to analyse any naturalistic theory by means of Stevenson's second pattern of analysis, we would clearly see that the writer of that theory has made an evaluative decision in selecting one particular descriptive meaning of the ethical word in question from among a variety of other possible uses of the word. Thus the naturalist would be guilty of embodying a "persuasive definition" in his analysis. In concluding a brief section on G.E. Moore (in which Stevenson recognizes the influence of Moore upon emotivists), he writes the following passage:

"Whereas Moore would point to a 'naturalistic fallacy', the present writer, throughout the many senses which the second pattern recognizes, would point to a persuasive definition."¹

The theory of 'persuasive definitions', obviously an important innovation in the history of philosophy, has of course a much wider range than simply the analysis and rejection of naturalistic theories. Like the 'naturalistic fallacy', which has been extended beyond the treatment of naturalistic theories, the theory of 'persuasive definitions' has the consequence of rejecting any theory which purports to give a specific 'One-And-Only-One-True' definition of any ethical word. But, going beyond the 'naturalistic fallacy', Stevenson's theory has something to say about the 'indefinable', although 'characterizable' function of ethical words. Stevenson is critical of metaphysical non-naturalists, like Moore, who say so little that is meaningful about the function of ethical judgments in "influencing, guiding, and remolding attitudes."

"To surround ethical judgments with otherworldly mystery may

¹EL, p. 273.

serve to intensify their influence, whether in one direction or another; but to explain it is quite another matter."

"Unless the 'nonnatural' quality can be defended on more positive grounds, it must be taken as an invisible shadow cast by confusion and emotive meaning."¹

The emotivist theories of Hume and Ayer do have something to say about ethical education, and Stevenson supplements what they have said by means of his theory of 'emotive meaning' and, especially, 'persuasive definitions'.

Like Ayer, Stevenson carefully distinguishes between the roles of the moralist and the analyst, and, in his philosophic writings, he explicitly chooses to be an analyst. "Analysis," he writes, "is a narrow, specialized undertaking, requiring only close distinctions, careful attention to logic, and a sensitivity to the ways of language."² Such an activity debars evaluation, at least in principle, and, for the most part, Stevenson is so careful in following this role, that the lapse I have indicated earlier³ is all the more startling. There are at least two other similar lapses, however, and they may be noted. A background consideration is that he points out that analysis "cannot pretend to sever its studies from all evaluation whatsoever," for, as he indicates, it "must introduce certain evaluations (though they will not be peculiarly moral ones) in the course of marking off its field of study."⁴ In his being 'motivated' to his particular inquiry, and in any implicit or explicit defense of his work, the analyst (especially if he is an emotivist) must be considered to have made evaluations.

"No inquiry," he continues, "...can divorce itself from the evaluative considerations that directly concern and guide the process of inquiry itself; nor is ethical analysis an exception to this general principle."

¹EL, pp. 108-9.
³Above, p. 171.

²EL, p. 222.
⁴EL, p. 160.

While this conclusion could probably be made as a result of an analysis of the analytic method, Stevenson permits himself an evaluation which, of course, does not follow logically from these considerations. After saying that a writer may 'wish to combine' the functions of the analyst and the moralist, and after pointing out the difficulties and unfortunate consequences of such practices in the history of philosophy, there can be no doubt that he would not wish to combine the practices in his work. Nonetheless, he makes the following value judgment:

"Ultimately, analysis and evaluation must be brought together; for the former is of use only in so far as it gives discipline to the latter. But they must not be forced together prematurely. They must carefully be distinguished before they can profitably be combined."¹

And in concluding a section in which he presents a most eloquent defence (partly analytic and partly 'persuasive') of his theory as contrasted with metaphysical and naturalistic theories, he offers the following primarily "persuasive" argument for the importance of his kind of analysis. He also reveals his own altruistic, utilitarian attitudes.

"The present analysis can afford no assurance that dictators and self-seeking politicians, whose skill in exhortation is so manifest, 'inevitably must' fail, if left unopposed, in reshaping moral codes to serve their narrow interests. Nor can analysis in itself be expected to oppose these men; for it must retain that difficult detachment which studies ethical judgments without making them. But this much must be said: Those who cherish altruism, and look forward to a time when a stable society will be governed by farsighted men, will serve these ideals poorly by turning from present troubles to fancied realms. For these ideals, like all other attitudes, are not imposed upon human nature by esoteric forces; they are a part of human nature itself. If they are to become a more integral part of it, they must be fought for. They must be fought for with the words 'right' and 'wrong', else these attitude-molding weapons will be left to the use of opponents. And they must be supported with clear-minded reasons, else hypostatic obscurantism will bring contempt to the cause it is intended to plead. The present task, with its humble task of clarification, cannot

¹EL, pp. 222-223 (my underlining).

directly participate in this undertaking; but it certainly does not confine one, after clarity is obtained, to a passive or cynical neutrality."¹

He need not perhaps have gone so far to 'persuade' some critics that this kind of theory does not discredit ethics.

Probably the most important point of difference between Stevenson's theory and earlier emotivist theories is the recognition (probably as the result of the influence of the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein) that a single word may be used for more than one purpose at one and the same time. Stevenson generalized these purposes, as we have seen, thus to maintain that any ethical word may be analysed in terms of both its 'emotive meaning' and its 'descriptive meaning'. From this distinction Stevenson has elaborated his two patterns of analysis, and has indicated in what manner the meaning of ethical terms may be 'characterized' and in what manner ethical judgments may be given 'substitute proofs' or 'supporting reasons'. From this distinction, also, he developed his important theory of 'persuasive definitions'. Thus it may be said that any significant innovation Stevenson has made to the emotive theory of values is dependent on this distinction.

The recognition that a single word may be used for more than one purpose at one and the same time is not only important in the consideration of Stevenson's theory, but it is important within the tradition of moral philosophy I have chosen to examine. Although Hare and Nowell-Smith do not entirely agree with Stevenson's use of the distinction, they both step off from that point. When discussing these theories in the next two chapters we must ask, then, if Stevenson's analysis of the use of ethical language has been sufficiently 'persuasive'.

¹EL, p. 110.

CHAPTER IV

R. M. HARE

Section 1

If attention from one's peers is any indication of the importance of a man's work, Hare is undoubtedly an important moral philosopher. His book The Language of Morals¹ was published only ten years ago (in 1952) and few other moral philosophy texts published in the last several decades have received as much attention in the English-speaking world.

In her book Ethics Since 1900 Mary Warnock places Hare (along with Urmson and Nowell-Smith) in a chapter which she entitles "After the Emotivists", and this is a useful classification. While Hare wishes to dissociate himself from the emotivists, his analysis of evaluative language has enough in common with the theories we have been considering to warrant including him in this thesis.

The plan for this chapter will be as follows: in the present section I shall consider Hare's Chapter 1, "Prescriptive Language"; Sections 2, 3, and 4 will treat, respectively, Chapter 2, "Imperatives and Logic"; Chapter 3, "Inference"; and Chapter 4, "Decisions of Principle". Section 5 will be a summary and assessment of Part II, "GOOD"; and Section 6 will be a summary and assessment of Part III,

¹The similarity of the title of this thesis to Hare's title will of course have been noted.---(Henceforth I shall use the initials LM to refer to The Language of Morals).

"OUGHT". The chapter will end with a brief summary of the conclusions of my analysis of Hare's thesis.

Since this assessment of Hare's thesis will follow the general plan of his book I shall outline his exposition of that plan. In the first section of Part I of the book he postulates what he takes to be the primary purpose of the use of the language of morals, and then he presents the plan for his argument. "The language of morals," he writes, "is one sort of prescriptive language." The two main species of 'prescriptive language' are 'imperatives' and 'value judgments'. 'Imperatives' are sub-divided into 'singular imperatives' and 'universal imperatives' or 'principles'; while value-judgments are sub-divided into 'non-moral' and 'moral'. This is similar to Stevenson's classification, except that where Stevenson's genus is 'emotive language', Hare says that the genus is 'prescriptive language';¹ and within the species of 'imperatives' he obviously intends to provide a more detailed analysis. Another important difference, which will be more apparent later, is that Stevenson had emphasized that "there are many differences unquestionably" between value judgments and imperatives. Mrs. Warnock quite rightly points out that Hare seems "to take it for granted that the merest beginner in the consideration of language can tell at a glance whether a word is prescriptive or not";² and, as we shall see, a criticism made against his classification is that there may be types of sentences outside his genus of prescriptive language which may, also, be said to be action-guiding. Furthermore, despite his wish not to reduce moral language to imperatives, he does not precisely indicate in what way imperative

¹Cf., W.H. Walsh, Reason and Experience, p. 50, for a similar division of 'judgments' into the two classes, 'prescriptive' and 'factual', with logic included within 'prescriptive' judgments.

²Op. cit., p. 129.

prescriptive language may be distinguished from evaluative prescriptive language. Indeed, near the end of the book he concludes that "to say that moral judgments guide actions, and to say that they entail imperatives, comes to much the same thing."¹ There is, then, some vagueness about this classification, which Hare admittedly describes as a "rough" classification.

Using his classification of prescriptive language, he intends first to compare the 'logical behaviour' of prescriptive language with other sorts of language. Then, within prescriptive language, he intends to proceed "from the simple to the more complex", beginning "with the simplest form of prescriptive language, the ordinary imperative sentence."

"The logical behaviour of this type of sentence," he writes, "is of great interest to the student of moral language because, in spite of its comparative simplicity, it raises in an easily discernible form many of the problems which beset ethical theory. Therefore, although it is no part of my purpose to 'reduce' moral language to imperatives, the study of imperatives is by far the best introduction to the study of ethics...."²

After a study of singular imperatives he will proceed to "universal imperatives or principles."

"The discussion of these, and of how we come to adopt or reject them, will give me an opportunity of describing the processes of teaching and learning, and the logic of the language we use for these purposes. Since one of the most important uses of moral language is in moral teaching, the relevance of the discussion to ethics will be obvious."³

Next, in Part II of the book, he undertakes to discuss "a kind of prescriptive language which is more nearly related to the language of morals than is the simple imperative"; that is to say, "the language of non-moral value judgments." He believes that many of the troublesome features of moral language are apparent in non-moral value judgments,

¹LM, p. 172.
³Ibid.

²LM, p. 2; cf. pp. 175-9, and 180.

and that a "proper understanding of them does much to elucidate the problems of ethics itself." As we shall see, Hare will argue that since both non-moral and moral value judgments are used for the same purpose (that of commending) their 'logical behaviour' is the same.¹ In this phase of his argument he discusses the word "good", first in its non-moral uses, and then in its moral uses. This plan is carried over into Part III, where the words "ought" and "right" are similarly treated. Finally, by means of an "analytical model", he undertakes to show the logical relations of the two species of prescriptive language, by relating the logic of non-moral and moral value judgments to the logic of imperatives.

My treatment of Hare will be somewhat more extensive than the treatment of others in this thesis, not because I consider him more important than the others, but because I find most of his main arguments unconvincing. In view of the generally favourable reception he has received from critics, even though they may oppose some of his arguments, it seems necessary for me to go into details to justify my generally unfavourable approach. The main significance of his work, so far as this thesis is concerned, will be seen in the difficulties which emerge in his efforts to establish a 'logical bridge' across 'Hume's gap', and to dissociate himself from 'emotivism'.

I shall treat Part I, "The Imperative Mood", in considerably more detail than Parts II and III, since in Part I Hare introduces what he considers to be important aspects of his analysis of prescriptive language. The parallels he draws between theories of the analysis of imperatives and of the analysis of value judgments will be seen to be very close.

¹LM, p. 140.

Towards the end of Part II, for example, in which he has been concerned primarily with the 'logical behaviour' of value words, he says that "the whole of Chapter 4 ("Decisions of Principle", the final chapter of Part I) might have been couched, not in terms of universal imperative principles, but of value-judgments."¹ Furthermore, he invites close attention to Part I when he says that "neglect of the principles enunciated in the first part of this book is the source of the most insidious confusions in ethics."²

His first main task is to consider the simplest form of prescriptive language, the imperative sentence, and to ask in what way it differs from sentences which express 'statements'. He recognizes that sentences in both the imperative mood and the indicative mood are "a mixed bunch", and that to classify them all under individual terms "may lead to serious error". Nevertheless, he says, "in a work of this character it is necessary to be bold", and thus he offers the following generalizations:

"I shall therefore follow the grammarians and use the single term 'command' to cover all these sorts of thing that sentences in the imperative mood express, and within the class of commands make only some very broad distinctions....For the same reason I shall use the word 'statement' to cover whatever is expressed by typical indicative sentences, if there be such."³

It seems apparent that his intention in using the word "statement" is to relate it only to what may less misleadingly be termed "descriptive or declarative indicatives"; thus, to avoid confusion, I shall henceforth use the phrase "descriptive indicatives" when it seems appropriate to do so. Even with this qualification, however, Hare's following the grammarians may be a logically misleading way of making the distinction between 'commands' and 'statements'. The major difficulty (one which

¹LM, p. 136.

²LM, p. 2.

³LM, p. 4.

will be more evident later) is that Hare de-emphasizes the use or purpose which a word or sentence may serve. Since individual words and sentences may have more than one use, as Stevenson so clearly pointed out, and as Hare himself allows,¹ it is possible that indicative mood sentences may have both a 'descriptive' and an 'evaluative' meaning. (I shall not speak of the possible purposes of 'imperatives' lest I be guilty of pre-judging one of Hare's arguments, which I shall consider later). Considering a sentence such as "It is the major's order that you report immediately," for example, it may be seen that an indicative mood sentence may also, in some sense, be said to be 'action-guiding'.² It would seem preferable therefore to have classified 'commands' and 'statements' in terms primarily of use or purpose, rather than in terms of what may be a misleading grammatical distinction. His purpose, in any event, is to indicate the difference between 'statements' and 'commands'. If the 'logical behaviour' of 'commands' is in some way to be a parallel to the 'logical behaviour' of ethical judgments, it is of some importance for him to show that this distinction may be made; otherwise he may ultimately have to face the possibility of warding off charges of 'naturalism'. But the task, he admits, is not easy. "It is difficult to deny," he writes, "that there is a difference between 'statements' and 'commands'; but it is far harder to say just what the difference is." If the distinction is to be made, he asserts, it will be made by asking how we use 'commands' and 'statements'. Then, in a passage which emphasizes the grammatical distinction, he writes the following sentence:

"An indicative sentence is used for telling someone that something is the case; an imperative is not---it is used for telling someone to make something the case."³

¹LM, pp. 46 & 79.

²Cf., LM, p. 163; and above, Ch. III, p.150 for Stevenson's view.

³LM, p. 5.

Since there have been theories of ethics which have tried to reduce value sentences to factual sentences, Hare considers two analogous theories which would reduce imperatives to 'descriptive indicatives.' The first of these is analogous to the theory which would assert that "A is right" means "I approve of A". In the same manner, one might say "Shut the door" means "I want you to shut the door." Although there is no harm in using this kind of language colloquially, he suggests, it may be philosophically misleading. Unfortunately, he does not allow the best advocacy for this naturalistic-type reduction of imperatives. The first part of his argument depends on the suggestion that if the reduction were correct there would be no logical contradiction between my saying "Shut the door" and your saying "Do not shut the door" (to the same person); and this, Hare suggests, would be an absurd conclusion. That is to say, if the reductionist theory is correct, the sentence "Shut the door" would be said to mean "I want you to shut the door", and the sentence "Do not shut the door" would be said to mean "I do not want you to shut the door"; and, in a case of disagreement in 'wants', there is no logical contradiction. This argument appears to be akin to Ayer's initial doctrine that there is no contradiction between ethical sentences which 'evince' and 'evoke' different or conflicting 'feelings'. But, in Ayer's case, the force of this paradoxical view depended on his maintaining that ethical judgments are 'meaningless'; and this view, in turn, rests on the assumption of a 'meaning in terms only of a referent' theory of meaning. Once it is allowed that this kind of theory of meaning is limited in its application and is inapplicable as a criterion for the 'meaningfulness' of ethical terms and sentences, then it becomes nonsensical to suggest that two sentences may not be said to be contradictory simply because they do not serve a purpose which is not, in any

event, the main purpose for which they were used. Now Hare, unlike Ayer, would acknowledge the limitations of the verificationist theory of meaning; thus it is difficult to understand how he could have said that in a disagreement of 'wants' there can be no contradiction. This is especially perplexing since the basis of his argument is that there is a logical contradiction between the initial imperatives "Shut the door" and "Do not shut the door". His argument, that is, is that the reductionist analysis of imperatives to descriptive indicatives expressing wants is inadequate in that it fails to retain the possible contradictory nature of imperatives. He cites a possible criticism for this part of his argument, but it could be put more strongly. I fail to see why the word "not" does not serve the same logical purpose in the two sets of sentences, and I fail to see why the imperatives in this case may be considered contradictory while the 'descriptive indicatives' may not. If it may be said, as Hare suggests, that 'descriptive indicatives' express only "a disagreement of wishes" and not contradiction, then, by the same token, it may be argued that the imperatives express only "a disagreement of commands" and not contradiction. It is of interest that, in a review of Everett Hall's What Is Value?, Hare is critical of Hall's thesis that the word "not" and "all the common logical connectives have a different behaviour in imperatives from that which they have in indicatives."¹

There is another aspect of his argument, however, for, possibly allowing for the kind of disagreement I have expressed, he writes the following passage:

"But there remains the difficulty that the sentence 'Shut the door' seems to be about shutting the door, and not about the speaker's frame of mind, just as instructions for cooking

¹Mind, Vol. LXIII, 1954, p. 263 & 265 ff.

omelets ('Take four eggs, &c.') are instructions about eggs, not introspective analyses of the psyche of Mrs. Beeton."

But this part of the argument is also inadequate. Hare, especially, should have allowed a stronger argument for the 'naturalist'-type reduction. When he later analyses the imperative 'Shut the door', he allows that there is more involved than simply the descriptive element referring to "your shutting the door in the immediate future." Such an analysis in itself, he allows, "does not tell us what the speaker is saying about it."¹ Something must be added, he says, "to nod assent" to the descriptive element, and, it may be said, this 'nodding of assent' is, in some sense, an indication of "the speaker's frame of mind." On the other hand, the 'descriptive indicative', "I want you to shut the door," is not only "about the speaker's frame of mind", but it is also about the shutting of the door in the immediate future. While I grant Hare's right to object that this is a misuse of his conception of the 'nodding of assent' element in his analysis, I would emphasize that my concern in mentioning it is simply to indicate that he recognizes that there is more to the analysis of indicatives and imperatives than he has allowed in the theory he rejects. He clouds the issue when he adds the sentence about the "introspective analyses of the psyche of Mrs. Beeton." A supporter of the 'reductionist' view might well be a behaviourist, saying no more, and perhaps less, about the speaker's 'frame of mind' than Hare does with his analyses to indicate the 'nodding of assent'.² If a distinction is to be made between 'commands' and 'statements', and if the parallel distinction between value judgments and factual or naturalistic statements is in some sense dependent on the argument's

¹IM, p. 17.

²Cf. above, Ch. II, p. 96.

being valid at this primitive level, then it has to be said that Hare does not provide an adequate foundation with this particular argument. Since he has more to say later about the logical behaviour of 'commands' and 'statements', however, especially about his proposed analysis to indicate differences in the 'noddings of assent' between imperatives and 'descriptive indicatives', I shall leave this difficulty in abeyance.

The second 'reductionist' argument is less troublesome. This theory, he says, may be summarized "by the statement that 'Shut the door' means the same as 'Either you are going to shut the door, or X will happen', where X is understood to be something bad for the person addressed." And a similar theory, he adds, would be that the imperative sentence could be 'reduced' to "If you do not shut the door, X will happen." This kind of theory, he says, is "parallel to ethical theories of the sort which equate 'A is right' with 'A is conducive to Y' where Y is something regarded by the generality as good, for example pleasure or the avoidance of pain." Although there is a formal parallel between these theories it should be noted that the 'imperative' theory does not seem to promise a 'pleasant' consequence if the command is obeyed, but only a 'painful' consequence if it is not obeyed; while the ethical theory is both positive and negative. But this does not seem to affect Hare's point. There is, he allows, an apparent plausibility to the 'imperative' theory when considered for situations where the consequences of not obeying a command are clearly understood. Dr. H.G. Bohnert, who postulated the theory in question, provides an example quoted by Hare, where "Run", said in a burning house, is somewhat similar in intention to "Either you run or you burn."

"But," Hare writes, "in cases where the end aimed at is not so easily recognized (the imperative being only to a small degree,

or not at all, 'hypothetical') the hearer may be quite at a loss to understand, on this analysis, what he is to supply after the word 'or'. It is very difficult to see how a sentence like 'Please tell your father that I called' would be analysed in Bohnert's theory."

And if Bohnert were to argue that a general evaluative consequence is implied--that, for example, if you do not obey the command, something bad will happen--then ultimately, as Hare says, the evaluative word 'bad' must be analysed.

"And similarly," he writes, "teleological theories of ethics which interpret 'right' as 'conducive to Z', where 'Z' is a value-word such as 'satisfaction' or 'happiness', only store up for themselves the difficulty of analysing such words."¹

While Hare is concerned to argue that imperatives cannot be 'reduced' to 'descriptive indicatives', he is also concerned that imperatives should not be regarded as having "some logically inferior status to that of indicatives." Thus, like Stevenson, he points out that the 'verificationist' theory of meaning, "which is in many ways a very fruitful one in its proper sphere,"² is misapplied if it is taken as a test for the 'meaningfulness' of imperatives and value judgments. If one assumes that some sense of the verification principle is the only criterion for 'meaningfulness', then one might be inclined to want to 'reduce' imperatives to 'descriptive indicatives', in the manner we have seen, or else to disparage all sentences, especially imperatives and value judgments (which, it should be noted, would include some indicatives), which do not pass the verification test. While Ayer could not be said to have asserted that value judgments are useless, there can be no doubt that he regarded them as having a logically inferior status to factual statements. (He later qualified his manner of expressing his theory, as we

¹LM, p. 8.

²Ibid.

have seen, and would no longer say that value judgments are 'meaningless').

A possible consequence of regarding imperatives as logically inferior to "proper indicatives" is that, as Hare says, one might be inclined to say that imperatives "do not say anything, they only express wishes." Such a theory is suggested if we were to consider the part of Ayer's analysis which says that ethical sentences 'express' or 'evinced' approval, ignoring the part which has to do with the arousing or evoking of feelings on the part of the hearer. Such a theory, Hare says, although acceptable colloquially, is logically misleading. His argument in support of his claim, however, is incomplete. He is especially concerned with the possibility that 'the expressing of wishes' may be construed as if it implied a "welling up inside us (of) a kind of longing, to which, when the pressure gets too great for us to bear, we give vent by saying an imperative sentence." Such an interpretation, he adds, would not be plausible in an analysis of the kind of 'command' we might give, for example, to a joiner when we issue a 'work order'. Nor would it be plausible as an analysis of a non-moral value judgment made, say, by a Minister of Local Government "who expresses approval of my town plan by getting his underlings to write to me saying 'The Minister approves of your plan' or 'The Minister thinks your plan is the best one'...."¹

The difficulty with this argument is that Hare sets up as his opponent possibly the weakest kind of 'wish' or 'approval' theory. That is to say, he concentrates his attack on an 'introspective' type of theory, not entirely unlike the one indicated by his earlier example referring to the introspective analyses of Mrs. Beeton's psyche. The theories are not of course exactly alike since the theory illustrated

¹LM, p. 10.

by the Mrs. Beeton example was a 'naturalistic' theory, whereas the one we are now discussing is a non-naturalistic emotivist theory of a primitive nature. An advocate for such an emotivist theory, however, need not express his theory in introspective terminology, and, as I have suggested earlier, might be able to use Hare's 'pattern of analysis' (to borrow Stevenson's phrase) in support of his theory. Since the argument dealing with the first 'reductionist' theory was seen to be inadequate, this present argument is inadequate for the same reason.

While Hare does not specifically say that Stevenson had assumed that only "proper indicatives" or 'descriptive indicatives' are above suspicion, he nevertheless briefly considers whether an analysis of imperatives might be constructed analogously to Stevenson's theory; and he includes this discussion within the same group as the theory I have just considered, which, Hare maintained, viewed what we might term 'improper' indicatives and non-indicatives suspiciously. Later in the book¹ he will try to indicate in what way his analysis of morals differs from Stevenson's; but, at this point, he asserts without discussion that "there could be no analogue, in the case of singular imperatives of the 'attitude' variety of the approval theory of value-judgments...." (A footnote to this statement says, "See, for example, C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language").² Once more I find myself in disagreement with Hare; and in view of Hare's concern in this and other instances to dissociate himself from Stevenson, it seems worth considering what this 'analogue' might be.

Although Stevenson had referred often to 'dispositions', as well as 'attitudes', he seldom used the kind of language in which there is

¹IM, p. 70.

²IM, p. 11.

reference to such terms as "general, or universal policies", or "principles". Of situations in which one has to make choices, Stevenson tends to write primarily in terms of specific responses to specific stimuli, although it must be pointed out, he would not have said that such responses in the vast majority of cases, if not all, are in any sense arbitrary. Choices are guided, so to speak, by relatively constant emotive meanings appropriate to the circumstances in question.¹ Speaking of choices and principles, he says that "the issue arises out of...specific decisions, and although broad principles may help its solution, the principles may be more difficult to establish than a judgment about a special case."² This is obviously what Hare has in mind when he suggests that if there could be an analogue to Stevenson's theory it would have to be in terms of "singular imperatives". Hare dismisses this possibility in half a sentence (saying in the other half that "it is possible to construct such a theory about universal imperative sentences"; and, as we have seen in his rough classification, he regards "universal imperatives" as synonymous with "principles"). I think he might have considered the possibility more thoroughly, as I shall later indicate.

Although Stevenson had given an important place to imperatives in his analysis of ethical judgments, especially in his first pattern of analysis, he did not analyse them as Hare plans to do. Stevenson seems to have assumed that we have an adequate understanding of the use of imperatives; and, apart from stressing that there are unquestionably dissimilarities as well as similarities between value judgments and imperatives, he does not provide us with an imperative analogue to his theory of ethics---which, in any event, Hare says is impossible. Let

¹Cf. EL, p. 305, for analysis of 'choice'.

²EL, p. 165.

us consider, however, how Stevenson might have treated the examples of two conflicting singular imperatives, "Shut the door" and "Do not shut the door." Since Stevenson described "disagreement in attitude" as "an opposition of purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires, and so on,"¹ it seems clear that he could have included Hare's singular imperatives among 'disagreements in attitude'. Of course he would not have provided an analysis of either of these imperatives in the same terms he uses in the working models for his first pattern, for there he was concerned with ethical, not imperative, words, and his concern was to characterize 'approval' and 'disapproval' which seem appropriate to value statements and not to 'commands'. It is possible, however, to suggest that the imperative sentence "Shut the door", and other singular imperatives, might be said to mean "I want this done; do so." It should be emphasized at this point that I am considering an analogue only to the first pattern, and that with the supplement of the second pattern there would be a richer descriptive meaning referring to, among other things, 'the shutting of the door by the hearer in the immediate future'. My concern is not to provide a complete analysis of singular imperatives, but merely to indicate that Hare was too peremptory when he said there could be no 'imperative' analogue to Stevenson's analysis of morals. Now in the analogue I have suggested, the phrase "I want this done" is analogous to the descriptive part of Stevenson's first pattern of analysis, and may be said to 'express' or 'describe' the speaker's attitude; while the phrase "do so" is a simple imperative addressed to guiding or changing the hearer's attitudes or actions. When the hearer's attitudes have been sufficiently altered by 'supporting reasons', the desired response will

¹EL, p. 3.

probably follow. Stevenson provides the basis for this possible analysis of imperatives in the following passage, in which he refers to the use of the imperative part of the first pattern:

"The way in which reasons support the imperative is simply this: The imperative is used to alter the hearer's attitudes or actions. In asking 'Why?' the hearer indicates his hesitancy to comply. He will not do it 'just because he is told to.' The supporting reason then describes the situation which the imperative seeks to alter, or the new situation which the imperative seeks to bring about; and if these facts disclose that the new situation will satisfy a preponderance of the hearer's desires, he will hesitate to obey no longer. More generally, reasons support imperatives by such beliefs as may in turn alter an unwillingness to obey."¹

I do not suggest that this proposed analysis of singular imperatives is expressed as Stevenson would express it if he were concerned; nor is it my present concern to argue for such an analysis. My purpose, as I have said, is simply to point out that Hare has neglected the possibility of such an analysis. It is his thesis that an understanding of the 'logical behaviour' of imperative sentences is important for the understanding of the 'logical behaviour' of ethical judgments, and he has therefore summarized and has indicated difficulties in actual and possible theories of the analysis of imperatives as a prelude to discussing parallel theories of the analysis of ethical judgments. If the 'logical behaviour' of the imperative analogues is in any sense taken as providing weak or strong foundations for the analyses of ethical judgments, Hare should not then overlook a possible analysis of imperatives which may support (or weaken) its parallel theory in the analysis of the language of morals. He especially should not overlook the possibility of this type of emotivist analysis of imperatives, in view of his concern to dissociate himself from emotivism.

¹EL, pp. 27-8.

As I have indicated, he does allow that it is possible to construct an 'approval' theory about "universal imperative sentences". The sentence "Never hit a man when he is down" is cited as an example of a universal imperative. In his 'rough classification' of prescriptive language he has indicated that "universal imperatives" may also be termed "principles" (the terms are not synonymous, for the word "principle" is more general and will include value principles as well; and, furthermore, he later allows that imperative mood sentences must be "enriched" to express the 'universality' of moral principles).¹ Now in the very first sentence of his book, and in the remainder of the first paragraph, he clearly indicates that much of his attention will be given to what he terms "principles". A portion of that opening paragraph is as follows:

"If we were to ask of a person 'What are his moral principles?' the way in which we would be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he did. He might, it is true, profess in his conversation all sorts of principles, which in his actions he completely disregarded; but it would be when, knowing all the relevant facts of a situation, he was faced with choices or decisions between alternative courses of action, between alternative answers to the question 'What shall I do?', that he would reveal in what principle of conduct he really believed. The reasons why actions are in a peculiar way revelatory of moral principles is that the function of moral principles is to guide conduct. The language of morals is one sort of prescriptive language."

In view of the concern for 'principles' expressed in this passage (to which I shall again return) it would seem obvious that of all of the 'imperative' analogues we have seen to this point, the 'approval' theory of 'universal imperative sentences' would be most compatible. Such a theory would be similar to Stevenson's, but whereas Stevenson had said that "principles may be more difficult to establish than a judgment about a special case," Hare obviously feels that principles may be

¹Cf., his final chapter, esp. p. 187. I shall discuss this later.

established, even if only provisionally. He balks, however, at the words "approval" and "attitude", and any similar words suggestive of an emotivist theory. The brunt of his complaint is expressed as follows:

"Sentences containing the word 'approve' are so difficult of analysis that it seems perverse to use this notion to explain the meaning of moral judgments which we learn to make years before we learn the word 'approve'; and similarly, it would be perverse to explain the meaning of the imperative mood in terms of wishing or any other feeling or attitude; for we learn how to respond to and use commands long before we learn the comparatively complex notions of 'wish', 'desire', 'aversion', &c."¹

An advocate for a Stevenson type of theory, however, could easily neutralize this argument. As we have seen, Hare does not provide an adequate analysis of the word "prescriptive",² (he admits indeed that "the terms 'value-words' and 'evaluative' are exceedingly hard to define");³ and if in the above quotation the word "approve" in all of its appearances were replaced with the phrase "prescribe or commend" the argument could be turned against Hare. As for the last clause in the quotation, it could be said that the infant, for example, learns how to respond to and use 'expressions' which indicate wishes, desires, and aversions, long before he can utter a meaningful word, including the word "command"; or, without begging questions for any emotivist position we might simply restate the clause in precisely the same way except for the addition of the word "command". The clause would now read; "for we learn how to respond and use commands long before we learn the comparatively complex notions of 'wish', 'desire', 'aversion', 'command', &c."---Later, when considering what he has to say about "decisions of principle", it will be necessary to consider whether he is further guilty of question-begging tactics against the Stevenson type of emotivist theory.

¹LM, p. 12.

²Above, p. 189.

³LM, p. 80.

Hare continues his opposition to an important aspect of emotivist theories in the concluding sub-section of his first chapter. He attaches some importance to this argument, and, especially since it is questionable, I shall treat it in some detail. His purpose is to reject the thesis that it is a 'function' of moral judgments and imperatives "to affect causally the behaviour or emotions of the hearer."¹ In pressing his argument he of course opposes a thesis, which is implicit in Hume's theory, explicit in Ayer's, and clearly elaborated by Stevenson, that moral judgments are included among 'persuasive instruments'. This suggestion, Hare asserts, "led to a difficulty in distinguishing their function from that of propaganda." Stevenson, we recall, had allowed that no logical distinction could be drawn between 'persuasion' as used by the 'moralist', and 'persuasion' as used by the 'propagandist'; the definitions of the words "moralist" and "propagandist" are made in terms of value judgments concerning 'good' and 'bad' persuasion; and thus the definitions of these terms are themselves 'persuasive'. Hare opposes this view.

"Since I am going to draw attention to some similarities between commands and moral judgments," he writes, "and to classify them both as prescriptives, I require most emphatically to dissociate myself from the confusion of either of these things with propaganda."²

The central difficulty with the 'persuasion' theory, he believes, is that it confuses "the processes of telling someone to do something, and getting him to do it." The 'processes', he maintains, are "quite distinct, logically, from each other."

In the main part of his argument he seeks to 'elucidate' his point by first considering what he believes is a 'parallel' distinction

¹IM, p. 12.

²IM, p. 14.

in the case of 'descriptive indicative' statements.

"To tell someone that something is the case," he maintains, "is logically distinct from getting (or trying to get) him to believe it. Having told someone that something is the case we may, if he is not disposed to believe what we say, start on a quite different process of trying to get him to believe it (trying to persuade or convince him that what we said is true). No one, in seeking to explain the function of indicative sentences, would say that they were attempts to persuade someone that something is the case."

He then draws his 'parallel' with the following passage:

"And there is no more reason for saying that commands are attempts to persuade or get someone to do something; here, too, we first tell someone what he is to do, and then, if he is not disposed to do what we say, we may start on the wholly different process of trying to get him to do it."¹

Thus, to illustrate his point, he says that a work-order, "'supply and fit to door mortise dead latch and plastic knob furniture' is not intended to galvanize joiners into activity; for such a purpose other means are employed."

It is in this argument that we have the first clear indication of the logically misleading nature of relating 'descriptive indicative' sentences to 'statements', and of 'imperatives' to 'commands'. As I have suggested earlier, this may lead to the tendency to de-emphasize the concern for possible uses of sentences. The fundamental inadequacy of this argument, as Professor R.B. Braithwaite pointed out in a review of the book,² is that Hare is preoccupied "with sentences taken in isolation from the contexts in which they are used...."³ Braithwaite extends this criticism wider than we need consider for the present. Referring to this particular argument, however, and specifically to the second part of the 'parallel' (concerning 'commands'), he expresses the belief that Hare "has been led into error by thinking too much of the

¹LM, pp. 13 & 14.

²R.B. Braithwaite, Mind, 1954, pp. 249-262.

³Ibid, p. 252.

sentence spoken when a command is uttered and too little of the circumstances which make the hearer of the sentence regard it as a command." The error in Hare's argument is an instance of what Professor Macmurray had seen as a problem for the techniques of philosophical analysis. In an article, "The Analysis of Language", published in 1951, Professor Macmurray makes this point in the following manner:

"In a proper empirical sense, language is only language in use. If we are to consider it for itself, as an object of analysis, and yet retain an empirical standpoint, we must consider it in relation to its use. This means we must treat it not as a bare fact but as an artefact....it shares with all artefacts an essential relativity to human purposes. No artefact can be defined without reference to the purpose it is designed to serve...."¹

Professor Macmurray goes on to point out that it is misleading to speak of the function of language, since "function" is a "biological metaphor which carries no implication of conscious purpose...." Hare constantly uses the word "function" (and not in inverted commas), and while one cannot definitely maintain that he has been logically misled by the word, it does appear that he regards 'commands' (in the argument we are discussing) as being divorced from the contexts in which they are used, and devoid of any suggestion of purpose. So long as purpose and context (including the speaker or writer, and hearer or reader) are kept in mind, it is difficult to understand how one can maintain that a 'command' serves only to tell a person to do something, and that the act of telling does not, in any sense, serve as a 'persuasive' or motivating or causal instrument used for the purpose of getting him to do it. As Professor Braithwaite says, "Surely telling a person to do something is one way of trying to get him to do it: if the telling alone does not succeed,

¹John Macmurray, The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 320.

other ways will have to be tried---rational ways like convincing him by giving him reasons, irrational ways like 'persuading' him with a thumb-screw."¹

In attempting to draw the distinction between 'telling' and 'persuading', Hare had hoped to counter what he terms "the so-called 'imperative theory' of moral judgments." Such a theory, in suggesting that moral judgments are 'persuasive instruments', stimulated a reaction in which he, to some extent, participates. He suggests, for example, that the 'persuasion' theory invites the "natural reaction", indicated by such expressions as "He's trying to get at me; I must be on my guard; I mustn't let him bias my decision unfairly; I must be careful to make up my own mind in the matter and remain a free responsible agent." Now all of these examples are of a kind which might have been used in a 'persuasive definition' of "propagandist". That Hare is guilty of taking a 'persuasive' approach to 'persuasion' in selecting these examples becomes most apparent when he immediately writes the following value judgment: "Such a reaction to moral judgments should not be encouraged by philosophers." The analyst, I should have thought, goes where his analysis leads him, regardless of whether his conclusions are judged 'good' or 'bad' by others. Hare is further guilty of using a 'persuasive definition' for his point of view that telling is not persuading, when he goes on to say, "On the other hand, these are not natural reactions either to someone's telling us that something is the case, or his telling us to do something."

The conclusion to which Hare is led, or to which he would lead the reader, is made clear in the final paragraph of the chapter. The

¹Op.cit., p. 251.

The 'imperative' theory, he believes, is "based on a misconception of the function, not only of moral judgments, but also of the commands to which they were being assimilated;" and thus the theory "seemed to impugn the rationality of moral discourse."

"But if we realize that commands," he continues, "however much they may differ from statements, are like them in this, that they consist in telling someone something, not in seeking to influence him, it does no harm to draw attention to the similarities between commands and moral judgments. For, as I shall show, commands, because they, like statements, are essentially intended for answering questions asked by rational agents, are governed by logical rules just as statements are. And this means that moral judgments may also be governed. We remember that the greatest of all rationalists, Kant, referred to moral judgments as imperatives."¹

Hare's purpose in this first chapter seems primarily to have been a negative one; that is to say, while endeavouring to support his thesis that it is helpful to study the 'logical behaviour' of imperatives before undertaking an analysis of the 'logical behaviour' of value judgments, he sought to indicate that some possible and actual theories of the analysis of imperatives were logically misleading. It is apparent, I believe, that he has not succeeded. To begin with, we have not seen a convincing argument to indicate that there is a difference between 'commands' and 'statements'; and thus there is no adequate basis for saying that a 'naturalistic' analysis of 'imperatives' is not possible. This is not of course to assume, by a rough analogy, that a naturalistic analysis of ethical judgments is possible. It might well be that this is an indication only of a significant difference between 'commands' and value judgments; although Hare's thesis that the 'logical behaviour' of 'commands' and value judgments is the same will be seen to be an obstacle to this suggestion. A second specific task in this chapter was to

¹LM, pp. 15-16.

indicate that theories which assume that the 'logical behaviour' of imperatives is inferior to the 'logical behaviour' of 'descriptive indicatives', are logically misleading. In this task, also, his arguments were inadequate. In his concern to dissociate himself from emotivism he tended to concentrate on crude, introspective analyses of imperatives, thus neglecting possible analyses which could be expressed in behaviouristic terminology. He dismissed altogether the possibility of an emotivist analysis of singular imperatives somewhat analogous to Stevenson's analysis of value judgments. And in trying to dissociate himself from a possible emotivist analysis of universal imperatives, he failed to provide a convincing argument for the distinction between 'telling' and 'persuading'. At this point one can make no conclusions about the possible affects of these inadequacies on the subsequent argument. One may say, however, that, from this study of imperative analogues, there is no evidence to suggest that his 'prescriptionist' analysis of value judgments will necessarily have any advantage over an emotivist theory like, or similar to, Stevenson's theory.

Section 2

In the opening section of the second chapter, "Imperatives and Logic", Hare declares his intentions of providing an analysis of 'imperatives' and 'descriptive indicatives', in order to "characterize clearly" the difference between them. The purpose, we remember, is to indicate that 'commands', like 'statements', are governed by logical rules, and that "this means that moral judgments may also be so governed." His argument in this chapter is of considerable importance to his analysis, thus I shall summarize it before assessing it.

As examples of the two types of sentences he takes the sentences

"You are going to shut the door" and "Shut the door". These sentences, he says "are both about the same thing, namely your shutting the door in the immediate future," even though, in their use, they "convey" different things about the shutting of the door. In concentrating first on what the sentences are 'about', he "recasts" them "more clearly", he says, "by writing in both cases an identical phrase for referring to this thing that they are both about". The suggested recast is: "Your shutting the door in the immediate future." But this phrase, in itself, does not tell us what each sentence "conveys". Something else must be added to complete the analysis. Thus he suggests that we might write the two sentences in the following manner (with the first example indicating the imperative):

"Your shutting the door in the immediate future, please."

"Your shutting the door in the immediate future, yes."

In referring to the first part, which is common to each of these sentences, he adopts the term "phrastic", "derived from a Greek word meaning 'to point out or indicate'." For the second part of the sentences, which is different in each case, he adopts the term "neustic", from a word meaning "to nod assent". If a difference is to be indicated between statements and commands, it will have to be done, he says, by means of the 'neustic'. This is not to say that there is nothing in common between 'neustics' of statements and commands, however, for, he maintains, they share the "common notion of, so to speak, 'nodding' a sentence." This is "something that is done by anyone who uses a sentence in earnest, and does not merely mention it or quote it in inverted commas; something essential to saying (and meaning) anything". For this common 'function' of the 'neustics', Hare uses the word "affirm". A further distinction is necessary, then, if we are to differentiate between commands and statements. The problem, he indicates, is that so far we have been thinking

primarily of the speaker, to the neglect of the hearer. "Closely allied to...an affirmation sign would be a sign for agreement for use by a hearer." And it is here, he says, that we find "a clue to the essential difference between statements and commands...."

"...it lies in what is involved in assenting to them," he continues, "and what is involved in assenting to them is...closely allied to what is involved in affirming them in the first place."¹

It is possibly because of this assertion of the 'close alliance' between 'affirming' and 'assenting' that Hare seems to believe that the single word "neustic" may perform the purpose, as Braithwaite puts it, of "indicating everything else in the situation which is relevant to its being the making of a statement or the giving of a command."² In any event, by means of the introduction of the factor of 'assent' into the 'neustic', Hare endeavours to introduce a logical distinction into his analysis. This is apparent in the following argument:

"If we assent to a statement we are said to be sincere in our assent if and only if we believe that it is true (believe what the speaker has said). If, on the other hand, we assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, we are said to be sincere in our assent if and only if we do or resolve to do what the speaker has told us to do."³

Thus he introduces the logical distinction I have mentioned. This distinction will be of further importance when we consider its 'parallel' in the logical behaviour of moral judgments.

"It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, and at the same time not perform it, if now is the occasion for performing it, and it is in our (physical and psychological) power to do so. Similarly, it is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a statement, and at the same time not believe it."

From this analysis Hare gives the following 'provisional characterization' of the difference between, respectively, 'statements' and 'commands':

¹IM, p. 19.

²Op.cit., p. 253.

³IM, pp. 19-20.

"...whereas sincerely assenting to the former involves believing something, sincerely assenting to the latter involves (on the appropriate occasion, and if it is within our power), doing something."

After having 'provisionally' indicated the difference between 'commands' and 'statements', Hare now turns to the factors they have in common. Considering the 'phrastics' only, he says that since the 'imperatives', like the 'descriptive indicatives', refer "to actual or possible states of affairs", they, like the 'indicatives', may suffer from what he terms the "malady" of being subject to the verification principle. In saying this Hare makes much the same distinction as Stevenson in his analysis of the 'descriptive' part of moral judgments. Of more importance for Hare's argument, however, is that since imperatives, like 'descriptive indicatives', share the common factor of having "logical connectives" within their 'phrastics', they both share the 'malady' of being able to be said to be self-contradictory. As we have seen earlier, Hare maintains that the "conjunction" of the two commands "Shut the door" and "Do not shut the door" is self-contradictory. Now since a 'command' may contradict another 'command', he continues, it must, like a 'statement', "observe certain logical rules." And such rules "are the rules for the use of all the expressions contained in it." In the use of "the so-called logical words" (of which "all" is an example) the logical rules "are what give the expressions all the meaning they have." That is to say, "to know the meaning of the word 'all' is to know that one cannot without self-contradiction say certain things, for example, 'All men are mortal and Socrates is a man but Socrates is not mortal'." To find out if a person understands the meaning of "all", Hare maintains, the "only" way one could do it "would be by finding out what simpler sentences that person thought were entailed by sentences containing the word 'all'." He grants that "entailed" is a strong word, but he stipulates that he

will use it in the sense that "a sentence P entails a sentence Q if and only if the fact that a person assents to P but dissents from Q is a sufficient criterion for saying that he has misunderstood one or other of the sentences." Now since "the word 'all' and other logical words are used in commands, as in statements", he continues, it "follows that there must also be entailment between commands." (The emotivist might well add that the same holds for the expression of attitudes).¹ He gives the following example of inferences "from universal imperative sentences, together with indicative minor premisses, to singular imperative conclusions":

"Take all the boxes to the station.

This is one of the boxes.

∴ Take this box to the station."²

But since this inference has two premisses in different moods, he suggests that it is necessary to have a logical rule to indicate the mood of the conclusion. This problem becomes pressing since he regards entailment relations in the inference as existing only between the 'phrastics' of the two premisses. How are we to know, he asks, that we cannot add the 'neustics' in a different way? He thus stipulates two rules "that seem to govern this matter", although we need consider only the second.

"(2) No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not contain at least one imperative."³

This rule, he says, "is of the most profound importance for ethics", and he gives examples "of some famous arguments in ethics that seem to have been unwittingly or wittingly founded upon it." Among those mentioned as having been "unwittingly" founded upon it are "Hume's celebrated observation on the impossibility of deducing an 'ought'-proposition from

¹Cf., above, p.195 where Hare would not grant this privilege to a type of emotivist theory.

²LM, p. 27.

³LM, p. 28.

a series of 'is'-propositions"; and Moore's illustration of the 'naturalistic fallacy'.

In assessing this chapter I shall indicate, first, that the provisional distinction between statements and commands is not even provisionally adequate; and, secondly, that even if the 'neustic-phrastic' analysis of imperatives and 'descriptive indicatives' (or 'commands' and 'statements') were adequate, it would not fulfil the purpose for which Hare intends it.

The crux of the 'provisional characterization' of the difference between statements and commands is in his assertion that "whereas sincerely assenting to the former involves believing something, sincerely assenting to the latter involves...doing something." Now, as Professor Braithwaite points out, Hare "never seriously considers the function of descriptive language," and the possibility is suggested that 'statements' may have "as their function (or as an important part of their function) that of guiding conduct."¹ It would appear that in his views concerning 'beliefs' or 'statements', Hare is less of a behaviourist than he is in his general approach to the analysis of 'imperatives' and 'value judgments'. As we have seen, he adopts an approach compatible with behaviourism in the very first sentence of his book, when he writes, "If we were to ask of a person 'What are his moral principles?' the way in which we would be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he did." And Braithwaite suggests that the behaviourist might well have recommended the same approach for the question "What are his beliefs?". This kind of approach, we recall, was in fact proposed by Stevenson when, assuming his 'pragmatic theory of meaning', he said that 'beliefs' and 'attitudes'

¹Op.cit., p. 261.

must both be analysed primarily by reference to dispositions to action.¹ If Hare had taken the same behaviouristic approach in the determination of meanings of 'statements', as he does in determining the meanings of 'commands' and 'moral principles', it would have been difficult for him to say that there is a clear distinction between 'statements' and 'commands'---that, in fact, as Braithwaite suggests, a 'function' of 'statements' may be that of guiding conduct. If the distinction between 'statements' and 'commands' is to be made it would appear that it would have to be made in another way.

The second basic difficulty with the chapter, as I have indicated, is that even if the 'phrastic-neustic' analysis of imperatives and 'descriptive indicatives' were adequate, it is doubtful that it would fulfil the purpose for which it is used. That is to say, the analysis, in association with the practical syllogism, would undermine the rule to which he rightly attaches so much importance, that "no imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not contain at least one imperative." If his analysis is held to provide a fair 'characterization' of the 'logical behaviour' of imperatives, then it is debatable whether a valid imperative conclusion can be drawn at all. This point may be made through further consideration of his example of deductive 'imperative' inference before it is analysed into phrastics and neustics (that is, "Take all the boxes to the station", etc.). Now if we either leave the inference in this form, or recast it into a traditional Aristotelian syllogism (for example, "All of the boxes are boxes which are to be taken to the station", etc.), then there could be no disagreement that the conclusion may be validly drawn. It is perhaps

¹Above, Ch. III, p. 135.

of some significance that Hare did not recast the argument into the 'phrastic-neustic' form when he illustrated his rule for 'imperative' inference. But let us now consider it as it might be 'recast' in the 'phrastic-neustic' form, remembering meanwhile that Hare will later make the point that all genuine moral reasoning is either implicitly or explicitly based on the Aristotelian practical syllogism:¹

Your taking all the boxes to the station, please.

This is one of the boxes, yes.

∴ Your taking this box to the station, please.

Now considering that we are concerned here with mediate, deductive inference, by what logical rule of inference may we argue from the imperative 'neustic' in the major premiss to the imperative 'neustic' in the conclusion? If Hare had made a provision for immediate inference in genuine moral reasoning there would possibly be not so much of a problem for logic, although it would lead to serious difficulties for moral philosophy in having to neglect the factual minor premiss. As Everett Hall pointed out when referring to an earlier article in which Hare first proposed this kind of analysis, "the addition of a dictor (neustic) to any given descriptor (phrastic) is obviously an extra-logical matter."² While Hare's special rule for imperative inference might well apply to the inference as considered before 'recasting', or as recast in the traditional Aristotelian form (it might be added, for example, as a supplement to the traditional rules for the syllogism), it does not appear to be applicable when recast in the 'phrastic-neustic' form and used in conjunction with the Aristotelian practical syllogism. Now if the rule is considered to be of "profound importance for ethics", as Hare has claimed it to be, then it is apparent that in some way the analysis must

¹Cf. LM, Ch. 3, esp. pp. 39, 43; and p. 56.

²E.W. Hall, What is Value?, pp. 141-2n.

be inadequate; and thus cannot adequately fulfil his purpose of 'characterizing' the 'logical behaviour' of imperatives. If the logical rule is to be upheld, the remedy, it would appear, would be to return to an Aristotelian approach; that is, to retain the value words within the three terms of the premisses and to assume that the value purposes or 'functions' of the words may be carried, so to speak, in any inference in which they appear. This is what Hare, in fact, seems to assume.¹

The analysis begins to be helpful if it is considered simply as a schema, akin to Stevenson's 'patterns of analysis', to help one understand differences and similarities between types of sentences; but, considered also as a 'device' to understand the 'logical behaviour' of such sentences in deductive inference, it is inadequate.

In his review of The Language of Morals, Professor Braithwaite, while in agreement with Hare's basic non-cognitivist approach, has been more directly critical, than I have been, of Hare's 'phrastic-neustic' analysis; and that is why I have just said that the analysis "begins to be helpful".

"Why Mr. Hare's venture is such a bold one," he writes, "is that to devise a notation capable, in itself, of indicating all the elements that are involved in a communication-situation is, I suspect, quite impossible. It would require factors which go to make up the complete 'meaning' of the original utterance in the context in which it is used...."²

He is especially critical of Hare's "limiting himself to the two neustics yes and please", for this, he believes, does not "do justice to the varieties of intention that are present in the various statement, command, and moral judgment situations." Here, again, Braithwaite suggests that Hare has been preoccupied "with sentences taken in isolation from the contexts in which they are used", and thus, in this instance, has neglected

¹Cf., IM, p. 26, Note 1.

²Op.cit., p. 253.

possible varieties of intention. Disarmingly acknowledging that he will emulate Hare's boldness, however, and that he will imitate his notational technique (that is, to use 'phrastics' and 'neustics'), he proposes that an analysis of statements, commands, and moral judgments will require a total of nine 'neustics' (three for each type of sentence), rather than simply two.

We need not at present consider Braithwaite's analysis in detail, since, even if it did more adequately 'characterize' the variety of intentions in our use of language (as I believe it does), it nevertheless would not fulfil Hare's intention, since, as I have argued, the 'neustics' would be extra-logical. This is not to suggest that Braithwaite is concerned to provide an analysis that could satisfy Hare's purpose, for, in fact, he argues to a conclusion that would include the main conclusion indicated by my criticism to this point. That is to say, his more general conclusion is that Hare has not adequately demonstrated his "principal thesis...that of the resemblance between commands and moral judgments and the lack of resemblance of each of these and non-moral statements of fact."¹ One of my main conclusions so far has been that Hare has not clearly distinguished between 'commands' and 'statements'; and since he has made much of a 'parallel' between the 'logical behaviour' of 'commands' and moral judgments, I have been compelled to say that, to this point, one of the lines of the parallel has not been clearly drawn. In what follows I shall be mindful of the other aspects of Braithwaite's criticism; that is, that Hare has not adequately distinguished between moral judgments and 'commands', and between moral judgments and 'non-moral statements of fact' or 'descriptive indicatives'.

¹Ibid., p. 252.

Section 3

Although the 'phrastic-neustic' analysis of sentences would undermine the rule "that an imperative cannot appear in the conclusion of a valid inference, unless there is at least one imperative in the premisses," the rule is obviously stronger than the analysis; and, as Hare says in his chapter entitled "Inference", it "may be confirmed by an appeal to general logical considerations." The rule turns out in fact to be a special application of a general principle of deductive inference, implicit in the distinctions of Aristotle, and firmly embodied in the philosophic writings of Hume and philosophers subsequent to Hume who were aware of his challenge. The more general principle is expressed as follows:

"For it is now generally regarded as true by definition, that (to speak roughly at first) nothing can appear in the conclusion of a valid inference which is not, from their very meaning implicit in the conjunction of the premisses."¹

Hare gives credit to Wittgenstein and others for this modification of Aristotelian logic, for in their work they have shown "to a great extent" the impossibility of the kind of approach assumed by Descartes "that we can arrive at scientific conclusions about matters of empirical fact, like the circulation of the blood, by deductive reasoning from self-evident first principles." But, as I have suggested, the reputation of Hume as a philosopher is based largely on the use of this general principle. As we have seen, Hare does say that Hume had implicitly used the principle in his challenge to those who argue from 'is'-premisses to 'ought'-conclusions. But this, like Hare's principle for imperative inference, is merely a special application of the principle and does not indicate the radical nature of Hume's work. As Kant saw,² Hume had

¹IM, p. 32.

²Cf. above, Ch. I, p. 27.

challenged the very possibility of the Cartesian type of rationalism--- the type of theory which Kant came to refer to as "dogmatic"; and Hare's argument is not essentially different from Hume's. The main difference is that, whereas Hume and other philosophers had implicitly relied on the principle, Hare explicitly wields it against theories which have violated it. In his manner of using it, however, he makes one qualification to which he attaches some importance. In saying that in his first expression of it he was 'speaking roughly', his point was that it was not sufficiently general to cover such an example as ' $x=2$ ' entails ' $x^2=4$ '.¹ It is not natural, he suggests, to say that the 'squared' symbol is implicit in the equation ' $x=2$ '. Thus he qualifies the principle to say that "there must be nothing said in the conclusion which is not implicitly or explicitly in the premisses, except what can be added solely on the strength of definitions of terms."

With an understanding of this principle of inference, he suggests, one may appreciate that "a Cartesian procedure, either in science or morals, is doomed from the start." He indicates more precisely what he means by "Cartesian" in the following passage:

"Many of the ethical theories which have been proposed in the past may without injustice be called 'Cartesian' in character; that is to say, they try to deduce particular duties from some self-evident first principle."¹

In his arguments against these 'Cartesian' theories his emphasis will be seen to shift somewhat more to a concern for the language of values rather than simply the language of imperatives. Before considering these arguments we should note that his special definition of 'Cartesian' theories does not encompass all cognitivist non-naturalist moral philosophers. That is to say, he defines a 'Cartesian' as a philosopher who

¹LM, p. 39.

says, first, that there are self-evident first principles, and, secondly, that particular duties may be deduced from these first principles. Later he will say that only "a few great writers, such as Aristotle, Hume, and Kant"¹ will avoid the net he sets for both naturalists and 'Cartesians'; and they escape, he says, only "if studied in the right way". It should be emphasized, however, that it is easy to find examples of cognitivists who are not 'Cartesians' as he has defined them: it seems in fact more difficult to find examples among the outstanding twentieth century cognitivists who would fit his definition. It is indeed ironic that Hare, a non-cognitivist, with his emphasis on the use of the deductive method of moral reasoning, comes closer than most twentieth century philosophers, with the possible exception of Toulmin, to the "Cartesianism" he rejects. The main difference is in the manner of deriving the most general principles. Some of the nonCartesian cognitivists, furthermore, are much less concerned with principles than they are with particular actions. Among them, for example, are deontologists such as Prichard and Carritt. Likening moral rules to the rules for sailing a ship Carritt had said that "their function is that of ballast rather than compass."

"If the difficulty of acting rightly comes from the difficulty of knowing what we now ought to do," he continues, "whether that difficulty depend upon a real complexity of the situation or upon our own bias in the way of desire or prejudice, then we shall question any constraining rule and must, as a last resort, fix our attention upon the particular instance, in which, as is admitted, the validity of rules first and most clearly appears."²

There are also teleologists, of whom Moore is perhaps the best example.

While Moore was concerned with the 'self-evidence' of 'ends', he agrees with the deontologists in saying that ethical conclusions are

¹LM, p. 45.

²Carritt, The Theory of Morals, p. 115; cf., Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?", in Moral Obligation, p. 9.

not deduced from general principles. He related particular acts to his general principles in 'causal', not deductive terms. Considering the question "What ought we to do?" he wrote as follows:

"...the question what things are related as causes to that which is good in itself...can only be answered by an entirely new method---the method of empirical investigation....Every judgment in practical Ethics may be reduced to the form: This is a cause of that good thing."¹

Perhaps the most obvious omission from Hare's classification of cognitivists is Kant and his present-day followers, such as H.J. Paton and W.H. Walsh. This of course may be a deliberate omission in view of the similarities between Hare's theory and Kant's, as we shall see. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Kantianism is its rejection of Cartesian 'dogmatic' rationalism, as well as Humean empiricism. While Kant ultimately appears to rely on an intuitive direct insight² for the recognition of his formulations of the categorical imperative, he does not suggest that particular duties may be deduced from the fundamental principles. In asking whether the maxim or minor principle of one's proposed or desired action could be a universal law, the procedure, whatever it is, is not syllogistic.³ Kant's practical syllogism seems to have been an analytic tool rather than something which one always explicitly or implicitly uses in moral reasoning. It is possible, however, that Hare's special arguments against 'self-evidence', which form part of his anti-'Cartesian' arguments, may also apply to these non-'Cartesian' cognitivists.

I shall first consider, then, the arguments against the 'Cartesians'. If such theories assume that particular duties, such as, for example, not

¹Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 146.

²Cf., Paton, The Categorical Imperative, pp. 244-5.

³Cf., Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory, p. 122.

to utter a falsehood on a particular occasion, may be said to 'follow from' or be 'enjoined' by general principles, then, as Hare argues, the principles of these theories "must contain implicitly or explicitly an imperative" to the effect that falsehoods are "not to be said in circumstances like those in which I now am." Furthermore, he continues, "they must contain other imperatives such as will regulate my conduct in all manner of circumstances, both foreseen and unforeseen." (We need not at this point question Hare's use of the word "imperative", rather than "duty" or "obligation", or, more generally, "value word". That is to say, if the conclusion is, for example, "My uttering a falsehood now is wrong" or "I ought not to utter a falsehood now", it may be suggested that the use of the word "imperative" to refer to the conclusion, or the relevant value word within it, is logically misleading. Such a consideration does not affect Hare's criticism of what he terms 'Cartesian' theories, however, and whether we speak of 'imperatives', or 'duties', or 'values', his arguments may still apply). Now if a moral system does have a set of principles which could be said to 'enjoin' particular duties, then, as he argues, "it is obvious that such a set of principles could not possibly be self-evident."

He uses several arguments to establish this point, and the first one is strikingly similar to Stevenson's suggestion that "principles may be more difficult to establish than a judgment about a special case."¹ This is ironic, since it is this consideration which seems to have led to Stevenson's emphasis on what Hare would term "singular" value judgments rather than "universal value judgments" or "principles", and, as I shall argue later, this statement may be turned against Hare. His

¹Cf. above, p. 201.

argument begins with the following passage:

"It is not easier, but more difficult, to assent to a very general command like 'Never say what is false' than it is to assent to a particular command 'Do not say this particular thing which is false', just as it is more difficult and dangerous to adopt the hypothesis that all mules are barren than to acknowledge the undoubted fact that this mule which has just died has had no progeny."¹

It might perhaps appear to be question-begging against the 'Cartesian' type of theory for him to use as an example the universal principle 'Never say what is false', since one can think of exceptions that might be made in terms of more 'abstract', or perhaps more 'valued' principles. A 'Cartesian' might prefer, for example, a more abstract principle such as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." But this would no more evade Hare's argument than would the less abstract principle. We are often uncertain about particular decisions, he could maintain, and, to paraphrase him, if we could not decide what to do in particular circumstances, how could we possibly decide in advance for innumerable circumstances whose details were totally unknown to us?

He makes the same point in another way by reference to the logical principle that "if one proposition entails another, then the negation of the second entails the negation of the first." This may be made more strongly, he suggests, by being less emphatic in one's statements about the propositions. That is to say, "to be in doubt" about assenting to the entailed proposition (without going so far as to deny it), is "to be in doubt about assenting to the first". If one is in doubt then, about a particular value judgment he is considering (assuming that there is no doubt about the factual circumstances), then he must also be in doubt about the general principle which is assumed to 'entail' the particular

¹LM, p. 40.

judgment. Thus it follows "that no general principle can be self-evident which is to be of assistance in deciding particular questions about which we are in doubt."¹

In these arguments Hare has used the term "self-evident" without questioning it. He now considers three possible arguments which might be used against him to insist that fundamental principles of ethics are self-evident. These are the arguments I have mentioned which, if convincing, might also apply to the non-naturalist cognitivists who are not 'Cartesians' in Hare's use of the term. "First," he writes, "it might be said that a principle of conduct was impossible to reject if it were self-contradictory to reject it." In rejecting this view Hare uses the kind of approach that would be expected also of Ayer and Stevenson; and this approach owes much to Hume, and something also to Locke.² That is, Hare employs the distinction (first clearly elaborated, although with differences, by Kant) of classifying 'sentences' as either 'analytic' or 'synthetic'. While these terms have been much debated,³ one may distinguish between them, as Hare does in the following passage:

"The term 'analytic'...may be defined with sufficient precision as follows: A sentence is analytic if, and only if, either (1) the fact that a person dissents from it is a sufficient criterion for saying that he has misunderstood the speaker's meaning or (2) it is entailed by some sentence which is analytic in sense (1). A sentence which is not analytic or self-contradictory is called synthetic."

To illustrate Hare's point, 'analytic' sentences, which cannot be denied without self-contradiction, would include: "7 plus 5 equals 12," or "Either A is true or is not true"; whereas 'synthetic' sentences, which may be understood and dissented from without logical contradiction, would include, for example, "Hume was a philosopher", and, the synthetic value

¹LM, p. 41.
³Cf. Ayer, LT, p. 16.

²Cf. Ayer, LT, p. 72.

statement, "Hume is the greatest of modern philosophers". Now, as Hare points out, if a principle is 'analytic', "it cannot have any content; it cannot tell me to do one thing rather than another." And as soon as a principle is given 'content', then, as Hume has given us good reasons for maintaining, it would no longer be a matter of logical or mathematical reasoning, and thus no longer could we consider it as if rejecting it involved self-contradiction.

Hare cites two other possible variations of the view that ethical principles are in some sense self-evident. The first of these suggests that "a principle of conduct might be impossible to reject, in the sense that its rejection was a psychological impossibility." The following excerpt from his argument should be sufficient to make his point:

"But what is or is not a psychological impossibility is a contingent matter; it may be a psychological impossibility for me to reject a principle which the more hardened or sophisticated have no difficulty in discarding. We could never have any justification for asserting that no one could ever reject a principle, unless that principle were analytic."¹

And if it is said to be analytic, then his first argument will apply.

The final possibility of the 'self-evidence' view is one which, as Hare indicates, "rests upon the introduction of a value word."

"It might be suggested that, though a principle was both logically and psychologically possible to reject, it might be not rational to reject it (it might be impossible for a rational person to reject it). Sometimes instead of 'rational' we have other expressions, such as 'a morally developed or morally educated person' or 'a competent and impartial judge'. These are all value-expressions."²

This kind of argument was used by Kant, in support of his 'categorical imperative'.³ Kant allows that it would be logically and psychologically possible for a potentially talented person "to give himself up to pleasure" rather than to bother about developing his talents. But, he maintains,

¹LM, p. 42.

³Kant, Groundwork, p. 90.

²LM, p. 42.

a man who would 'universalize' the maxim of such a way of life--thus seeing the consequences of living a life, "like the South Sea Islanders... (devoted) solely to idleness, indulgence, procreation, and, in a word, enjoyment"--could not possibly, "as a rational being", will that this should become a universal law or principle.---Another example from traditional moral philosophy is John Stuart Mill's moralistic advocacy of his form of utilitarianism. It is "better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied", he had written, and his defence of this value judgment rests largely on the following passage:

"From this verdict of the only competent judges, I apprehend there can be no appeal. On a question which is the best worth having of two pleasures, or which of two modes of existence is the most grateful to the feelings, apart from its moral attributes and consequences, the judgment of those who are qualified by knowledge of both, or, if they differ, that of the majority among them, must be admitted as final."¹

The problem, of course, as Hare points out, is "what would be the criterion for deciding" whether a person is 'rational' or 'a competent judge'? And, as he argues, there is no way out of this problem that could not be said to be either question-begging or of no consequence to ethics.

In these arguments he has thus used the general principle of deductive inference to indicate the inadequacies of any cognitivist type of "moral system which claims to be based on principles which are self-evident",² and from which particular duties are said to be able to be 'deduced'. The implications of his arguments, as I have suggested, may also be applied to cognitivist theories which claim simply that their first principles are self-evident. In summing up his arguments to this point he claims also to have given "reasons for holding that no moral system whose principles were regarded as purely factual could fulfil its

¹Mill, "Utilitarianism", pp. 9-10 (Everyman's)
²LM, p. 44.

function of regulating our conduct." While he may indeed have given such reasons, his specific arguments against naturalistic theories have not been convincing. It should be noted, in any event, that in his treatment of naturalistic theories he did not directly treat naturalistic theories of ethics (as he has done in the case of 'Cartesian' theories), but rather their possible 'parallels' or 'analogues' in theories of imperatives. This suggested the possibility that in their 'logical behaviour' commands may be more like statements, and less like moral judgments, than Hare supposes. It is of some interest, also, that in his treatment of 'Cartesian' theories he did not rely on his 'phrastic-neustic' analysis, but relied instead on the general principle of inference to which he felt that his analysis of imperatives had led. With that general principle, however, rather than the unconvincing 'phrastic-neustic' analysis, he could argue, as he wishes to do, that neither imperatives nor moral judgments can be entailed by factual premisses. And if it is the 'function' of "general moral principles" to "regulate our conduct",¹ and if the "end-product" of a moral argument is "an imperative of the form 'Do so-and-so'",² then he could argue that neither naturalistic nor 'Cartesian' theories of ethics could be adequate.

Hare thus comes to the same conclusions as Ayer and Stevenson about much of traditional moral philosophy. And if it is the conclusion to which one is logically led, he admits that "it is not surprising that the first effect of modern logical researches was to make some philosophers despair of morals as a rational activity." One type of reaction to this 'despair', he suggests, was that some philosophers proposed that "although, in the strict sense of the word...moral judgments and imperatives cannot be entailed by factual premisses, yet there is some looser

¹LM, p. 43.

²LM, p. 39.

relation than entailment which holds between them." He quotes S.E.

Toulmin as an example:

"Suppose that we put forward an ethical argument," writes Toulmin, "consisting partly of logical (demonstrative) inferences, partly of scientific (inductive) inferences, and partly of that form of inference peculiar to ethical arguments, by which we pass from factual reasons to an ethical conclusion---what we might naturally call 'evaluative' inference."¹

Such a proposal is of course startling in view of all the arguments against this kind of 'inference'---arguments which would be agreed upon by non-naturalists ranging from intuitionists to emotivists. It is also of more than usual interest coming, as it does, from a philosophical analyst who had studied under Wittgenstein. Thus Hare cannot ignore Toulmin's kind of argument (he proposes, however, not to treat Toulmin's theory specifically, but rather to discuss in a general way the type of theory of which it is one of the philosophically better examples). As Hare points out, it is the concern of those who postulate this kind of theory "to save ethics" from the kind of attacks made by early 'verificationists',² and they do this, he says, "by showing that moral judgments are, after all, good empirical propositions, only their method of verification is different from, and somewhat looser than, that of ordinary fact-stating sentences." While Toulmin disagrees with any suggestion that "many so-called 'ethical' statements are just disguised statements of fact",³ I believe that Hare's generalization is a fair one in view, especially, of the kind of analogy Toulmin draws between argument in science and in ethics,⁴ and of the manner in which he relates ethical judgments to specific 'accepted social practices'.⁵ The procedure by which Toulmin proposes that we may argue from factual reasons to an ethical conclusion

¹Toulmin, *The Place of Reason in Ethics*, p. 38.

²*LM*, pp. 46 & 54.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 129.

³*Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 146.

(which is treated in more specific detail in Hare's review of The Place of Reason in Ethics¹ is, first, to establish by means of an analysis of ethical language the 'function of ethics'. This 'function', Toulmin concludes, is "to correlate our feelings and behaviour in such a way as to make the fulfillment of everyone's aims and desires as far as possible compatible."). This general 'function' now is seen to underly the establishing, in any community, of criteria which may serve as special 'principles of inference' for ethical argument. Thus, assuming these special 'rules of inference', we may argue from factual premisses to an evaluative conclusion.

One of Hare's main arguments against this type of theory is succinctly expressed in the following passage:

"If we ask 'What are these special rules of inference?' it is clear that they are nothing but the old rules of conduct in a new guise."

As he argues in his review (in which he does not 'beg the question' for 'imperatives' and 'principles' as he does in the arguments in his book), the acceptance of a special 'rule of inference' is "a moral judgment in its own right". The manner in which Toulmin claims to be able to argue from factual reasons to an ethical conclusion has been accomplished, as Hare maintains, "only by smuggling in the essential moral premiss disguised as a rule of inference." As Stevenson might suggest, this kind of theory is guilty of using 'persuasive definitions'---which, in Toulmin's case, seem to favour a type of utilitarianism, if we may take his 'function' of ethics as a fundamental principle of ethics.

Another of Hare's arguments against this type of theory provides a useful commentary on his theory concerning the use of ethical principles.

¹The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, 1951, pp. 372-5.

He is especially critical of the suggestion that the main difference between the 'special rules of inference' and the ordinary rules of logic is that "these rules of inference are looser than the rules of logic."¹ The difficulty with such a theory is that in using 'special rules of inference', which incorporate value principles, we may draw conclusions which we may or may not accept, without any suggestion that we may be guilty of self-contradiction. Thus the 'special rule' would have to be said to be valid only 'in general'. He thus asks what could be meant by saying that a rule is 'in general' valid, but not always or universally valid. There are two ways, he suggests, in which one might regard a "rule or principle" as being "incompletely rigorous".

"The first way is when the rule lays down that a certain kind of action is in certain circumstances to be done, but it is understood that it is sufficient if it is done in the great majority of instances; exceptions are allowed if they are not too numerous in proportion to the total number of cases."²

He gives as an example "the principle that undergraduates must not take a week off work during term." Such a principle, as he allows, is 'loose', but since even the exemplary student would be checked if he violated the rule too often, Hare says that "the exceptions to it are limited solely in number, and not otherwise determined."

The second way of regarding principles as loose is "very different". In this category one finds principles such as "Never say what is false", which, we grant, may be broken in exceptional cases (such as, for example, in "the winning of wars, or the preservation of innocent people from homicidal maniacs").

"Here the exceptions are not limited by a numerical restriction, but by the peculiarities of particular classes of instance. We do not say 'Speak the truth in general, but it doesn't matter if

¹LM, p. 50.

²Ibid.

you say what is false once in a way'; we say rather 'Speak the truth in general, but there are certain classes of cases in which this principle does not hold; for example, you may say what is false in order to save life, and there are other exceptions which you must learn to recognize'.¹

In the first class of instances, the exceptions, according to Hare, are all of a kind. The rule remains precisely the same, and the undergraduate in the example asks himself, "Have I been breaking this principle much lately?" In the second class, however, the exceptions to the rule are "decisions of principle" made in terms of other principles. The first principle does not therefore remain the same but is modified. That is to say, the rule could now become, "Never say what is false, except in war-time to deceive the enemy." In this sense, then, Hare maintains, our principles of conduct, as indeed most principles of skill also, are not loose at all."

"Thus", he writes, "far from principles like 'Never say what is false' being in some way by nature irredeemably loose, it is part of our moral development to turn them from provisional principles into precise principles with their exceptions definitely laid down; this process is, of course, never completed, but it is always going on in any individual lifetime. If we accept and continue to accept such a principle we cannot, as in the case of the rule about taking time off work, break it and leave the principle intact; we have to decide whether to observe the principle and refuse to modify it, or to break it and modify it by admitting a class of exceptions; whereas if the principle were really by nature loose, we could break it without modifying it at all."²

In concluding his chapter on "Inference" Hare offers one final argument against the Toulmin type of theory, and this argument serves as a prelude to his important fourth chapter, "Decisions of Principle".

"The gravest error...of the type of theory which I am criticizing," he writes, "is that it leaves out of our reasoning about conduct a factor which is of the very essence of morals. This factor is decision."³

¹LM, p. 51.

²LM, p. 54.

³LM, pp. 54-5.

That is to say, a theory which treats 'principles of conduct' as 'logical rules' or 'special rules of inference', cannot presume to allow that conclusions of ethical arguments are conduct-regulating (Toulmin had said that the 'function' of ethical judgments "is to alter one's feelings and behaviour").¹ All that one can claim to do by means of such a procedure is to come to a logical conclusion. Inferring may allow one simply to say that "if he tells a falsehood he will be breaking ...(a) principle, whereas if he tells the truth he will be observing it." But the word "inference" is "seriously misleading", Hare argues, if it is used, as it is in this type of theory, to include 'decisions' to act or not to act upon a particular conclusion. This additional activity, he says, "is not inference at all, but something quite different, namely, deciding whether to alter the principle or not." Hare thus maintains that "what we have to investigate is, not some looseness in entailment, but the way in which we form and modify our principles, and the relation between this process and the particular decisions we make in the course of it."² Part of this argument, it is apparent, rests on the distinction he had wished to make earlier between telling a person something and getting him to do it; and an advocate for Toulmin might well argue that a conclusion to the effect that, for example, "If I tell a lie I will be breaking a 'principle'", may be seen to be action-guiding. 'Decisions', that is, might be 'stimulated' by such conclusions. Discussion of this point, however, is related to another part of Hare's argument, for the argument rests on the hypothesis that 'decision' is "a factor which is of the very essence in morals", and is an integral part of "our reasoning about conduct". For this part of his argument we must consider what he

¹Op.cit., p. 130.

²LM, p. 55.

says in his next chapter.

Section 4

In the final chapter of Part I, "Decisions of Principle", Hare is ostensibly concerned with 'universal imperatives' or 'principles', but, as we have seen, he has suggested that the whole of this chapter may be couched in terms of value judgments. In his elaboration of the chapter, as Braithwaite expresses it, Hare "modulates" into a consideration of value judgments. Bearing this in mind I shall not be too concerned to keep 'universal imperative principles' and value judgments in separate compartments.

Hare's approach in his chapter "Decisions of Principle" may perhaps more readily be understood by contrast with the general approach taken by Stevenson. In at least one important respect, Stevenson is more agnostic in his predominantly behaviouristic views about man. Man, for him, seems closer to the 'man as a black-box' analogy once suggested to me by a behaviourist psychologist. Stevenson seems less willing than Hare, that is, to say anything suggestive of activities inside the 'black-box'.¹ Thus while he does have something to say about decisions, he tends to look upon decision-making primarily in terms of specific responses to stimuli. He does not of course regard such responses as being either arbitrary, or like reflex actions, for he has said a great deal about the stability or 'inertia' of attitudes. His analysis of decision-making, however, could be generalized as follows: if I wish another person to make a desired decision (that is, to react or respond in a desired way), I provide appropriate 'supporting reasons' (or stimuli)

¹Cf. Stevenson, EL, p. 50. For Ayer's similar views see above, Ch. II, p. 102.

with the hope ultimately of evoking or 'stimulating' the desired response. He does not concern himself with the possibility that there might be logical relations between 'principles of conduct' and specific decisions or value judgments, for, as he has said, principles are more difficult to establish than particular value judgments; and, furthermore, he follows the "rough but useful rule" that "ethical judgments are supported or attacked by reasons related to them psychologically rather than logically."¹ He thus appears to go further than even Ryle in trying to avoid the "Ghost in the Machine" myth. Ryle will allow, that is, that in the 'exercises of the disposition of knowing how to do something', we observe, as he says, "rules or canons or the applications of criteria."² This, as we shall see, is approximately the same approach taken by Hare. He believes that more can be said about decision-making than Stevenson has said; and furthermore, as I have indicated, he is most unwilling to accept the emotivist doctrine that moral judgments serve as 'persuasive instruments' in the guiding of decisions of actions. I shall argue, however, that in this chapter, as in earlier chapters, he does not make a convincing case that his analysis is to be preferred over Stevenson's.

In summarizing and assessing this chapter I shall keep in mind three main questions: first, what precisely does Hare mean by the word "decision"; and does his account satisfactorily preserve the distinction he would make between his theory and the so-called 'persuasion' theories of Stevenson and Ayer?; secondly, what precisely is meant by the phrase "principle of conduct", and is Hare's use of it free from difficulty?; and, thirdly, is the attempt to indicate that there is a 'correspondence' between moral reasoning and the Aristotelian practical syllogism a

¹Above Ch. III, p. 163.

²Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 46.

faithful analysis of moral reasoning? As we shall see, the second and third questions overlap.

The chapter opens with the statement that two factors "may be involved in the making of any decision to do something."

"Of these," he writes, "the first may at any rate theoretically be absent, the second is always present to some degree. They correspond to the major and minor premisses of the Aristotelian practical syllogism. The major premiss is a principle of conduct; the minor premiss is a statement, more or less full, of what we should in fact be doing if we decide one or other of the alternatives open to us."

This passage, it may be noted, is reminiscent of an aspect of Kant's proposed analysis of practical reason; although, as I have suggested earlier, it is doubtful if Kant intended his practical syllogism to be more than an analytic aid to understand 'practical reason'. In any event, the similarity is apparent by a comparison of the preceding passage with the following passage by Kant.

"...the division of the analytic of pure practical reason must resemble that of a syllogism, namely proceeding from the universal in the major premiss (the moral principle), through a minor premiss containing a subsumption of possible actions (as good or evil) under the former, to the conclusion, namely, the subjective determination of the will...."¹

There are other similarities, as we shall see.

Consideration of the two factors which may be involved in decision-making will provide the general plan for Hare's chapter. He will argue, again like Kant,² that neither 'principles, nor the factual data of the 'minor premiss' (that is, the data which provide information about the effects or possible effects of a decision), may be neglected in any theory purporting to give an adequate account of decision-making. In presenting his case, as the reference to the 'corresponding' practical

¹Critique of Practical Reason, (tr. Abbott), p. 184.

²Cf. Paton, The Categorical Imperative, p. 76.

sylllogism suggests, he is concerned also to say that there is a logical procedure, even if it is often implicit, either in the making of a specific decision or in trying to justify it.

Hare begins his exposition of 'decisions of principle' by first considering the minor premiss. "We plainly cannot decide what to do," he says, "unless we know at least something about what we should be doing if we do this or that." In illustrating this point he indicates that a person confronted with a problem which demands a decision between possible alternative actions must consider all relevant data, primarily the possible effects of each of his alternatives. He then goes on to say that "it is the effects which determine what I should be doing; it is between the two sets of effects that I am deciding." This passage would of course be seized upon by an advocate for the emotivist point of view that 'reasons' for moral judgments are related to the judgments psychologically rather than logically. In saying that the effects "determine" what I should be doing, Hare is using language suggestive of a kind of doctrine he wishes so much to avoid. Undoubtedly he wishes to suggest something different when he goes on to say that "it is between the two sets of effects that I am deciding." But if this is his intention we should expect that he will provide an analysis explicitly revealing a difference between 'deciding' and 'being determined'; otherwise there is the possibility that the emotivist might wish to say that Hare is being logically misled in his attempts to avoid emotivism and to postulate a form of conativism. This is not to suggest that Hare is necessarily presupposing any hypostatic departmental psychology in which a 'faculty of will' is operative in decision-making; but it may raise the question whether the terminology of decision-making may be philosophically misleading if expressed in language which suggests that 'decisions' are not

'caused'. I shall return to this question later.

Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson had emphasized that the data upon which we make value judgments are of a factual nature. Hare, similarly, emphasizes that the data for the minor premiss of his practical syllogism must be factual---or at least as factual as we can make it. In qualifying his stipulation he points to the distinction that single words may have a variety of uses. It would be "well-nigh impossible", he admits, to exclude all words which may have an evaluative meaning "in view of the way in which evaluative meaning pervades our language...." Later he will say that "almost every word in our language is capable of being used on occasion as a value-word."¹ The criterion for deciding whether the minor premiss can admit a given word, he says, is that "there are definite tests (not themselves involving evaluation) for ascertaining its truth or falsity."²

He now considers the relation between this premiss and the major premiss, and this leads him into a discussion of the content of the major premiss, that is, 'principles'. Since I shall maintain that several of his main theses are inadequate I shall summarize his argument in some detail lest I be accused of misinterpreting his position. To bring out the logical possibilities of the reasons for having principles, he begins by offering the hypothetical and "artificial" example of a man with "a peculiar kind of clairvoyance such that he can know everything about the effects of all the alternative actions open to him" but who so far has neither formed nor has been taught any "principles of conduct". If we ask of this man, after he had made a particular decision, why it was that he should have chosen one set of effects rather than another, Hare

¹LM, p. 79.

²LM, p. 58.

suggests that he might answer in two possible ways: first, he might say, "I can't give any reasons; I just felt like deciding that way; another time, faced with the same choice, I might decide differently." On the other hand, he might say, "It was this and this that made me decide; I was deliberately avoiding such and such effects, and seeking such and such." While Hare allows that the first decision might "in a certain sense" be called "arbitrary", even though the man had "some reason for his choice, namely that he felt that way"; the second decision could not in any sense be 'arbitrary'. Such a decision is not arbitrary since the man "has started to form principles for himself; for to choose effects because they are such and such is to begin to act on a principle that such and such effects are to be chosen."

"We see in this example," he continues, "that in order to act on principle it is not necessary in some sense to have a principle already, before you act; it may be that the decision to act in a certain way, because of something about the effects of acting in that way, is to subscribe to a principle of action---though it is not necessarily to adopt it in any permanent sense."¹

He gives two further reasons for having principles. The next one is that since, unlike the clairvoyant, our knowledge of the future is "fragmentary and only probable", we must make our decisions upon "principles of prediction which we are taught, or form for ourselves." These principles of prediction, like the principles of the clairvoyant's decision, are also "principles of action", for "to predict is to act in a certain way." The third reason why we have principles, he continues, is that "most kinds of teaching are impossible" without principles, "for what is taught is in most cases a principle."

"In particular," he says, "when we learn to do something, what we learn is always a principle. Even to learn to be taught a fact (like the names of the five rivers of the Punjab) is to learn

¹LM, p. 59.

how to answer a question....By this I do not of course mean, that to learn to do anything is to learn to recite by rote some universal imperative sentence. This would involve us in a vicious regress; for learning to recite is a kind of learning, and must have its principles; but in that case we should have to learn to recite the principles of reciting. The point is rather this, that to learn to do anything is never to learn to do an individual act; it is always to learn to do acts of a certain kind in a certain kind of situation; and this is to learn a principle."¹

The importance of having "principles of action", he continues, is that when confronted with a type of problem, in a recognizable type of situation, we are able "to single out quickly the relevant aspects of a situation, including the (possible) effects of the various possible actions, and so choose quickly, and in many cases habitually." Thus, he suggests, "when the performance of the lesser duties has become a matter of habit, we have time to think about the greater." (I would raise a minor point of disagreement here about Hare's way of expressing this, for it seems doubtful that many of our decisions resulting from practices which have become habitual are therefore of 'lesser' value--which seems to be what Hare means--than decisions for which we have little past experience to guide us. It would be preferable to speak of 'more easily learned' duties, on the one hand, as compared with 'more complex' or 'more difficult' duties).

There is, he says "a limit in practice to the amount that can be taught to someone by someone else." A driving instructor, for example, "cannot do more than begin to teach his pupil the art of driving, because the conditions to be met with in driving are so various." There comes a point, then, when the learner must begin to teach himself; and he does this by making decisions. Thus Hare reinforces the point we have already seen, that "the principles that are taught us initially are of a pro-

¹LM, p. 60.

visional kind...."

"Our training, after the initial stages, consists in taking these principles, and making them less provisional; we do this by using them continually in our own decisions, and sometimes making exceptions to them; some of the exceptions are made because our instructor points out to us that certain cases are instances of classes of exceptions to the principle; and some of the exceptions we decide on for ourselves."

When we modify a principle, he writes, "we adopt whichever form of the principle leads to the effects which we choose to pursue."¹

Throughout this chapter Hare presupposes a distinction between what Ryle had termed "knowing how" and "knowing that".² This distinction is most apparent in the following passage:

"It is hardly necessary to point out", Hare writes, "that principles of driving, like other principles, are normally not inculcated by their verbal repetition, but by example, demonstration, and other practical means. We learn to drive, not by precept, but by being shown how to do particular bits of driving; the precepts are usually only explanatory or mnemonic of what we are being shown."³

This emphasis on learning principles by learning how to perform types of actions might seem to suggest that to refer to what we learn as "principles" is stretching a use of language; but Hare insists not. Drivers and trappers, he suggests, often know what to do in certain situations "without being able to say how...though if a skill is to be taught, it is easier if we can say how."⁴ To reinforce his point that principles are involved in such non-verbalized situations, he says that "all decisions except those, if any, that are completely arbitrary are to some extent decisions of principle". When confronted, he says, with what appears to be a new situation (for example, when a child leaps in front of my car I do not put out my hand to signal my intention to stop as I had been taught to do) I make an exception which modifies the principle. There-

¹LM, p. 62.
³LM, p. 63.

²Ryle, The Concept of Mind, Chapter II.
⁴LM, p. 64.

after, Hare suggests, "I accept the former principle with this exception, that in cases of emergency it is better to steer than to signal." On the spur of the moment, he suggests, I would have "made a decision of principle." To understand what happens in cases like this," he continues, "is to understand a great deal about the making of value-judgments."

He does not wish to maintain that 'principles of driving' (that is, 'principles of skill') are precisely the same in nature as 'principles of conduct'. One general difference, although it is not absolute, is that in activities like driving we are generally able to establish the ends to be achieved in advance. Thus the principles of good driving may be considered as "hypothetical imperatives". With ethical principles, however, we often have to begin by teaching at first "simple rules of thumb, and the learner only gradually comes to see what the ends are, at which the instruction is aimed."¹ A more fundamental difference, however, is, that principles of conduct are "in Aristotle's term 'architectonic' of" principles of skill, for, he continues, "the ends of good driving (safety, the avoidance of inconvenience to others, the preservation of property, and so on) are justified ultimately, if justification is sought, by appeal to moral considerations."

After suggesting that his account is sufficiently general to cover all of the different ways of "learning a skill or any other body of principles, or of justifying a particular decision made in the practice of it", he turns directly to the question of justification of actions. He contrasts the approach of philosophers who tend to stress 'effects', with those who stress 'principles'. The error of both extremes, he maintains, is not in what they say, but rather that they postulate that

¹IM, p. 66.

their respective theories provide the true account of the justification of actions.

"The truth is that," he continues, "if asked to justify any decision, we have to bring in both effects--to give content to the decision--and principles, and the effects in general of observing those principles, and so on, until we have satisfied our inquirer. Thus a complete justification of a decision would consist of a complete account of its effects, together with a complete account of the principles which it observed, and the effects of observing those principles---for, of course, it is the effects (what obeying them in fact consists in) which give content to the principles too. Thus, if pressed to justify a decision completely, we have to give a complete specification of the way of life of which it is a part. This complete specification it is impossible in practice to give; the nearest attempts are those given by the great religions, especially those which can point to historical persons who carried out the way of life in practice. Suppose, however, that we can give it. If the inquirer still goes on asking 'But why should I live like that?' then there is no further answer to give him, because we have already, ex hypothesi, said everything that could be included in this further answer. We can only ask him to make up his own mind which way he ought to live; for in the end everything rests upon such a decision of principle; He has to decide whether to accept that way of life or not; if he accepts it, then we can proceed to justify the decisions that are based upon it; if he does not accept it, then let him accept some other, and try to live by it."¹

Thus, like Ayer and Stevenson, he allows for the possibility that moral arguments may ultimately 'break down'. He rejects the notion, however, that any decision which has been given such 'justification', even if it does fail to 'satisfy our inquirer', is in any sense arbitrary. "Far from being arbitrary," he writes, "such a decision would be the most well-founded of decisions, because it would be based upon a consideration of everything upon which it could possibly be founded."²

He now directly relates what he has been saying to the analysis of 'value judgments'. In speaking of decisions of principle, he points out, one inevitably begins to use value-language. "Thus we decide that

¹LM, p. 69.

²LM, p. 69.

the principle should be modified, or that it is better to steer than to signal." Thus, he says, "to make a value judgment is to make a decision of principle." Then he writes the following passage:

"To ask whether I ought to do A in these circumstances is (to borrow Kantian language with a small though important modification) to ask whether or not I will that doing A in such circumstances should become a universal law."¹

I suppose he is thinking primarily of the argument in which he said that each decision of principle is part of a never-ending process to make principles more precise, or less provisional. This, along with his argument suggesting that in 'justifying' decisions (including value judgments) one must consider the perpetual interplay of principles and effects, would indicate in what sense one would will that the principle of his action should become a universal law. He does not at this point indicate what he means by the "important modification" to Kant's doctrine, but possibly he is referring to a point he makes in the final chapter of the book when he says that "proper universal sentences cannot be framed in the imperative mood."² Since he will press his point that moral principles must be considered as "universal", he proposes an "analytic model" to "enrich the imperative mood". While this point must be left until we consider what Hare means by a "universal principle", one must wonder how it will be possible to suggest that moral principles may be both universal and modifiable at one and the same time. In a later passage,³ although not without qualms, Hare assumes for the sake of his argument that there can be no synthetic a priori truth---that is, that there can be no 'categorical imperative' of the nature sought by Kant.

After this reference, Hare writes the following passage in which

¹LM, p. 70.

²LM, p. 187.

³LM, p. 83.

he suggests in what way his theory will differ from Stevenson's.

"It may seem a far cry from Kant to Professor Stevenson; but the same question could be put in other words by asking 'What attitude shall I adopt and recommend towards doing A in such circumstances?'; for 'attitude', if it means anything, means a principle of action. Unfortunately, Stevenson, like Kant, devotes very little space to the examination of this first-person question; had he paid due attention to it, and avoided the dangers of the word 'persuasive', he might have reached a position not unlike that of Kant."¹

The main difference between Stevenson and Kant, he goes on to suggest, is that Kant had pointed out that "we have to make our own decisions of principle. Other people cannot make them for us unless we have first decided to take their advice or obey their orders." This is to suggest, I assume, that Stevenson's emphasis on the disagreement of attitudes of two or more people has led to the neglect of what is involved when an individual is confronted with a moral problem which he must decide for himself without the direct influence of specific judgments by another person. Hare suggests that the moral agent is rather like the scientist. The scientist's confidence "in other people's observations", he writes, "is ultimately based, among other things, on his own observations and his own judgments about what is reliable. He has in the end to rely on himself."

"The case of the moral agent is not dissimilar," Hare continues.

"When in our early days we are given our elementary moral instruction, there are some things we are told, and some things that we do. If, when we did as we were told, the total effects of our so doing, when they happened, were always such as we would not have chosen, had we known, then we should seek better advice, or, if prevented from so doing, either work out our own salvation or become moral defectives."

He concludes the chapter with, first, an excursion into the sociology of morals, discussing the way in which the morality of a society may change; and, secondly, with the question, "How shall I bring up my

¹LM, p. 70.

children?" The merit of this question, as he maintains, is that "it is here...that the most characteristic uses of moral words are to be found."¹ I shall not discuss this conclusion except to note that he allows that "the only instrument which the parent possesses is moral education---the teaching of principles by example and precept, backed up by chastisement and other more up-to-date psychological methods."

In assessing this chapter, as I have indicated earlier, I should like to consider three main questions. The first one is, what precisely does Hare mean by the word "decision"? I shall take up this question at the point we have just seen, where Hare is concerned to dissociate himself from Stevenson's emotivism, while associating himself, to some extent, with Kant's conativism (at least this seems to be his intention). Unfortunately Hare does not say precisely what a 'decision of principle' is. To say that it is used for 'commending' or for 'guiding actions' is to say nothing that Stevenson could not have said. Hare's approach is rather to say what a 'decision' is not, but, even so, he is not precise about what he is rejecting. He appears to rely primarily on the reader's drawing his own conclusion from the special argument he had presented earlier to the effect that "the processes of telling someone to do something, and getting him to do it, are quite distinct." That is, when considering imperative analogues to ethical theories, he had maintained that "the function of a command is (not) to affect the hearer causally, or get him to do something." Similarly, we are to assume that the 'function' of a moral judgment, which is a decision of principle, is not to affect the hearer causally; and since, if I am a hearer, and if I make a decision of principle to act on the basis of a moral judgment told

¹IM, pp. 74-5.

to me, then my decision has not been causally affected. Now whatever precisely he means by this, it is apparent, as I have suggested, that his case rests primarily on the argument to distinguish between 'telling' and 'persuading'. But, as we have seen, that argument is by no means convincing. Unfortunately, also, as I have pointed out, his linking of the words "persuasion" and "propaganda" is dependent on his persuasively defining "persuasion" with terms normally used to apply to propaganda and not to other possible types of persuasion. Taking his arguments, then, at face-value, I believe it may be said that he has given no convincing arguments to indicate why we should use the word "decision" as he intends it to be used (whatever precisely that intention is), rather than as Stevenson would use it. Speaking of 'choice', which is equivalent to Hare's use of the word "decision", Stevenson has this to say:

"...it is difficult to see how a choice can be considered anything more than an attitude actually at work---i.e., an attitude considered in its specific bearing upon a given action. It seems to be more than this, it may be urged, only because the term hints at some unique faculty of volition, hypostatically conceived."¹

Hare of course had attached some importance, also, to the suggestion that Stevenson, in emphasizing disagreement between two or more persons, had thus neglected the consideration of what is involved when an individual must ultimately 'work out his own salvation' and must 'rely on himself'. But, as we have seen,² Stevenson is by no means unmindful of this problem. Where Hare speaks of the consideration of possible alternative sets of effects, Stevenson speaks of a "conflict of attitudes" within the person considering possible courses of action. The considerations for resolving the 'conflict', in order to make a decision, are much the same as for resolving "disagreement in attitude". "In personal decisions," he wrote,

¹EL, p. 305; Cf., above, p. 201.
²Above, Ch. III, p. 121.

"we again find reasons which are psychologically related to the judgment in which they eventuate." And the data upon which such decisions are made are, like the data of Hare's minor premiss, "all of them concerned with matters of fact."¹ Without some further analysis of the word "decision" by Hare, an analysis which would say precisely what he means in suggesting that Stevenson's analysis is inadequate, and without a convincing argument to indicate that 'telling' is not 'persuading', it is difficult to assess the merits of his case.

What more could he possibly intend in using the word "decision" as if it implied a significant difference from Stevenson's use? The use of the word "causally" in his statement that a 'command (and thus a decision)² is not "causally affected", appears to be the most significant clue to his intention. In his Index, under "Imperative Sentences", he includes the phrase "function of, not causal", thus it is apparent that he attaches some importance to this distinction. It is apparent, then, that he is suggesting that a decision is, in some significant sense, uncaused; whereas the emotivist must presuppose that a decision which is held to be a response to a stimulus or to stimuli is not, in the same significant sense, uncaused. If this is his intention, it would appear that he is assuming that his theory is on the side of the angels; whereas the emotivist must be considered to support a deterministic theory, and thus have to face the old charge that moral judgments and actions are of no consequence for ethics if they are said to be 'caused' or 'determined'. Unfortunately, Hare provides no guidance for his intentions, for, in the Preface he mentions that, "in particular, the problem known as 'The Freedom of the Will', which has a place in most introductions to ethics, is

¹EL, p. 133.

²Cf. above, p. 248.

not mentioned...", and his reason for not mentioning it is not that he considers the problem unimportant but that it has to do rather with "problems of the language of the psychology of morals, than of the language of morals itself." If he is presupposing the controversy, however, and doing so in a manner to reject Stevenson's theory, then what he seems to suggest should be weighed against what Stevenson has written. This controversy, according to Stevenson, "presents no permanent difficulty to ethics, being largely a product of confusions." He has a considerable amount to say about this problem in his chapter "Avoidability; Indeterminism", but, for our purposes, we need consider only two of his arguments.

"References to indeterminism," he writes, "will not help to defend the 'impossibility' of an enlightened ethics, but will simply put one difficulty in the place of another. If a man's choice were indeterminated, it would be theoretically unpredictable. The man himself could not have foreseen his choice, nor could he have taken any steps to prevent it. It would have sprung not from his personality, but from nothing at all. He would still be a 'victim', not of determining circumstances,¹ but of chance. What room is there here for an ethical judgment?"

While Stevenson's second argument may seem to presuppose his view of ethical judgments as 'persuasive instruments', it applies nevertheless to any view such as Hare's which maintains that ethical judgments are in some sense action-guiding.

"The main confusion of the view, however, lies not in its failure to avoid a difficulty, but in its creation of an artificial one. There is no reason whatever to suppose that a reflective person, believing that a man's action sprang from a determined choice, will on that account suspend judgment of the action. Between judging such an action and judging the rain for falling there is this difference: a judgment of the rain will make no difference to it, whereas a judgment of human action, provided only that the action is avoidable, may serve to make such actions more frequent, or less frequent, in the future. For the latter case the judgment will itself be a new determining factor---one

¹EL, p. 313. For similar argument see Hume, Treatise, II, III, Sect. I, and Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Sect. VIII, Part I, Div. 74, pp. 95-96.

that is added to the old determining factors of a man's choice, and which may serve as a means of controlling or guiding him. It would be curious if a 'reflective' person, on coming to believe that choice is subject to causes, should immediately lose interest in having his judgments number among them."¹

(By "avoidable", Stevenson means an action that "would not have happened if a choice that was not made had been made.")² We may see from these arguments, then, that Stevenson would remain undisturbed by any suggestion that his theory, which allows that ethical judgments are 'persuasive', is therefore a deterministic theory. It is of interest that G.E. Moore has lent support to Stevenson's view when in his Ethics he argues that "it is extremely doubtful whether Free Will is at all inconsistent with the principle that everything is caused."³

The second main question proposed as a guide for assessing Hare's chapter, "Decisions of Principle", was, what precisely does he mean by "principle of conduct"? This question, as I have said, overlaps with the third: Is the attempt to indicate that there is a 'correspondence' between moral reasoning and the Aristotelian practical syllogism a faithful analysis of moral reasoning? Here again we may take Hare's dissociation from Stevenson's theory as a stepping-off point. Hare had said that "'attitude', if it means anything, means a principle of action". Now as I have suggested earlier, Stevenson's general approach is closer to the 'man as black-box' analogy. Hare obviously believes more can be said, and he wants to extend his analysis of moral argument and decision-making further than Stevenson had done. Whereas Stevenson had spoken of 'attitudes' as dispositions to respond in certain ways in certain types of situations, and whereas he had said that 'general principles' were more difficult to establish than particular judgments, Hare suggests that this is only a

¹Ibid.

²EL, p. 298-9.

³Op.cit., p. 130.

partial answer---and, unfortunately, an answer impaired by Stevenson's not avoiding "the dangers of the word 'persuasion'." Nevertheless, much of what Hare had said about 'principles' could be taken into Stevenson's theory, with simply an exchange of the word "principles" for the word "attitudes". That is to say Stevenson could, for example, agree that the best way to be certain about a person's 'principles' or 'attitudes' would be by studying what he did; the statement "Never say what is false" could be acceptable as an expression of a 'principle' or 'attitude'; when we choose to act in a certain way we could be said to be acting in terms of a 'principle' or 'attitude'; 'attitudes' or 'principles' are provisional and subject to alteration; they are not of a factual nature; and they are not self-evident. In many respects, then, Stevenson could accept the use of the word "principle" as Hare uses it, and could analyse it in his 'dispositional' terminology. Thus, where Hare uses the phrase "principles of conduct" we could, for the most part, use the words "attitudes", "policies", and "practices", without doing any injustice to his intentions. Where, then is the difference?

The main difference is in the use Hare would make of 'principles of conduct'. Throughout his argument there have been two main hypotheses. The first is that the function of "general moral principles" is to regulate our conduct, and the second one is that the main particular 'instrument' for regulating moral conduct is "an imperative of the form 'Do so-and-so'." Now, he argues, if this imperative is the "end-product" of "a piece of genuinely evaluative moral reasoning...it follows that its principles must be of such a kind that we can deduce such particular imperatives from them in conjunction with factual minor premisses."¹

¹LM, p. 39.

He does not examine until later the assumption that "value judgments, if they are action-guiding, must be held to entail imperatives";¹ but this need not concern us at present since his special problem in the later context concerns primarily the conclusion of the practical syllogism. Our present problem is rather with the nature of a principle of conduct as the major premiss of the practical syllogism. It should be noted of course that if the assumption that a principle of conduct may serve as a major premiss is found to be in any sense inadequate, then by virtue of the general principle of inference which is so important to Hare's argument, there will be a consequent weakness in the conclusion.

Now even if all genuine moral reasoning were said to correspond to reasoning within the practical syllogism, we may nevertheless question Hare's proposed use of a principle of conduct as a major premiss for moral reasoning. There is a confusion in his use of the word "principle", and in what follows I shall distinguish between a principle as taught or as told to anyone (for this use, the word "precept" seems less misleading), and, on the other hand, a principle of conduct as proposed or as adopted or acted upon or in use. For this sense the word "maxims" may also be used. My argument will be an argumentum ad hominem and I shall use terminology as Hare would, except for the qualification concerning 'precepts' and 'principles of conduct' or 'maxims'.

One of the main difficulties with Hare's argument is that he places undue emphasis on one 'principle' in any particular situation, to the neglect of other possible 'principles' which may more appropriately apply to the situation. While I may have been taught by my elders or preceptors the precept "Never say what is false", and while, through their

¹LM, p. 163.

the complex growth of my moral experience would probably ultimately lead to a situation in which I would unhesitatingly disregard the precept and the principle of conduct

Our present problem is rather with the nature of a principle of conduct as the major premise of the practical syllogism. It should be noted of course that if the assumption that a principle of conduct may serve as a major premise is found to be in any sense inadequate, then by virtue of the general principle of inference which is so important to Kant's argument, there will be a consequent weakness in the conclusion. Now even if all genuine moral reasoning were said to correspond to reasoning within the practical syllogism, we may nevertheless question Kant's proposed use of a principle of conduct as a major premise for moral reasoning. There is a confusion in his use of the word "principles" and in what follows I shall distinguish between a principle as taught or as held by anyone (for this use, the word "precept" seems less misleading), and, on the other hand, a principle of conduct as proposed or as adopted or acted upon or in use. For this sense the word "maxims" may also be used. My argument will be an argument ad hominem and I shall use terminology as Kant would, except for the qualification concerning 'precepts' and 'principles of conduct' or 'maxims'. One of the main difficulties with Kant's argument is that he places undue emphasis on one 'principle' in any particular situation, to the neglect of other possible 'principles' which may more appropriately apply to the situation. While I may have been taught by my elders or preceptors the precept "never say what is false", and while, through their

teaching and example I may have 'decided' to accept this as a principle of conduct, (for example, in a situation in which my family is in danger). This, Hare would allow. But in such a situation the action I would choose to take is not so much a question of modifying the precept and the principle of conduct, expressed as "Never say what is false", so much as it is to act in terms of the end to save my family. In so doing I have to make a statement----which happens to be a lie. If this action is said to be a decision of principle, then the principle would be "To save my family in situations like this, I should say such-and-such, which is false."¹ This is to assume Hare's point that when I make a particular value judgment I adopt at the same time a principle of conduct. In retrospect, I may then realize that the precept and the principle of conduct, expressed as "Never say what is false", is limited and must be modified. But let us suppose that I have now accepted that the precept and the principle of conduct should be modified, and let us suppose, again, that my family is in danger and that a lie would probably save them. Any analysis of this situation would indicate, I believe, that I would be even less concerned with the modified precept and the principle of conduct about lying ("Never say what is false except to save my family in this type of situation") as a major premiss for my moral reasoning. The principle of conduct for the situation before me, which, after analysis, I have verbalized and may now regard also as a precept ("To save my family in situations like this I should make statements even if they are false") is again the principle upon which I would act, or is rather the decision of principle for the value judgment which I would make. I would thus neglect the modified principle of conduct and precept concerning lying ("Never say

¹For a similar argument see E.M. Adams, "Mr. Hare on the role of principles in deciding", Mind, LXV, 1956, pp. 78-80.

what is false except when---etc.,) just as I would have neglected the primitive, unmodified principle of conduct and precept ("Never say what is false"). Indeed, as I have just intimated, I could neglect the modified principle and its precept more readily since I would no longer be so much concerned to justify telling a lie in such a situation.

It would seem trivial, then, to say that the implicit or explicit major premiss of a piece of moral reasoning should be of such a nature that a particular value judgment should be able to be deduced from it, since, in any new situation demanding a value judgment I must, at the same time, adopt a new general principle of conduct under which the value judgment is said to be subsumed. But how 'general' is this principle?

In my decision to lie 'to save my family now', the general principle of conduct could be no more general than, if as general as, the expression "To save my family in situations like this I should say such-and-such, which is false." (For the sake of this argumentum ad hominem I shall not suggest the phrase "in situations exactly like this". This would be a debatable procedure and my point may be made without entering that debate). The general principle is not, it should be emphasized, either "I ought never to say what is false except in situations like this" or, the more general principle, "all people ought never to say what is false except in situations like this". My general principle could be no more general than this, since, as Hare has allowed, in agreement with Stevenson, "it is not easier, but more difficult, to assent to a very general command... than it is to assent to a particular command...."¹ Furthermore, by no logical means would it be justifiable to say that from the principle of my action in a particular situation, I may therefore conclude that all

¹LM, p. 40; Cf., above p. 225.

people ought to act that way in the same kind of situation. In arguing from one to all I would of course be violating a principle of inference, which Hare especially could not condone. If I were to say that the principle of conduct of my particular value judgment should be applicable for all people in the same type of situation I would appear to be introducing a value judgment into my argument.

Now if the general principle of conduct under which a particular value judgment may be subsumed must be as limited in its generalization as I have indicated, in what sense may it be said to be provisional or modifiable? That is to say, in the hypothetical example I have given, I have argued that the general principle must be no more general than "To save my family in situations like this I should say such-and-such, which is false." There are no logical grounds for making it more general. Now in any particular situation in which I must seriously consider the possibility of acting in such a way that my family would be endangered (such situations must have occurred, for example, in Nazi Germany) a new value judgment, and thus a new principle of conduct, is required, since the situation is not like the earlier situation. This new principle is not the old principle modified, but is a new principle which 'generalizes', so to speak, the maxim of the action I would choose to follow. To use (or misuse) Hare's words, "it is the effects which determine what I should be doing...." I need not, then, modify the earlier principle of action and its corresponding precept ("To save my family in situation like this--that is, the earlier situation--I should say such-and-such, which is false"), since if a situation like that earlier one again occurred I would use precisely that same principle, and may indeed teach it as a precept to my children when they are mature enough not to be too confused by it.

In one sense, then, of the word "principle", that is the sense in which I am said to make a decision of principle when I make a value judgment, the use of the principle as a major premiss is trivial. My particular value judgment, that is, is 'generalized' or 'universalized' to refer to my acting in that way in all situations like the particular situation in which I have made the judgment. In this use of the word the principle is not modifiable since it would not make sense to suggest that it should be different. And if challenged to justify my particular value judgment it would be of little value to appeal to the principle of my action as a major premiss for a moral argument, since the principle is simply a generalized statement of what I have done (and this point may be extended to actions I have proposed to do).

A rigid moralist may of course ask, "But why did you lie?" But this would be to introduce a question referring to a special aspect of my action to save my family. My reply would probably be, "To save my family", implying that I regard it as justifiable to make a statement which happens to be a lie in a situation like that. And this is to lead, in retrospect, to the question of the modification of principles of conduct and their corresponding precepts, and the recognition of the provisional nature of the precepts we have been taught (not principles of conduct as we act upon them, for, as I have argued, principles of conduct in this sense cannot be said to be provisional when we act upon them. They are what they are. If I later regard them as wrong this is because the moral situation--including myself within it--is a new situation demanding a different value judgment and a different principle of conduct). If we say, then, that a principle is provisional or modifiable we must be using the word to refer either to the precepts which we have been taught, which may be too general to be applicable to all of the various situations

known to the instructor or preceptor, or to principles of conduct as verbalized in retrospect. If, as a child, I act on the precept "Never say what is false", I have adopted it as a principle of conduct, and for the situation in which I use it that principle is not modifiable. When a situation may ultimately occur in which a lie seems necessary to achieve an end which I would choose, I may bypass or disregard the precept and its corresponding principle of conduct, and my value judgment is in terms of a new principle of conduct, for which, in retrospect, I may frame a new precept.

Hare obscures this distinction when he says that "we learn to drive, not by precept, but by being shown how to do particular bits of driving",¹ and when, although saying that there is a difference between principles of skill and principles of moral conduct, he nevertheless regards them as being more akin than they in fact are. After saying that we learn to drive "not by precept", he goes on to say that "precepts are usually only explanatory or mnemonic of what we are being shown." My suggestion is that the phrase "Never say what is false", as Hare uses it in his paradigm for a principle of conduct, is more appropriately termed a "precept" in this sense. No doubt, to a considerable extent, we do teach our children the principle of conduct that truth is to be preferred to falsehood by the examples we set for them; but in guiding them or correcting them we must resort primarily to precepts, with other psychological devices including the examples we set, to guide them to accept the precepts as principles of conduct. Thus the phrase "Never say what is false", in our use of it to teach our children, is a precept which we as preceptors regard as provisional or modifiable. But a

¹IM, p. 63.

principle of conduct as a generalized statement of a particular value judgment which we may make either as a child or adult is not modifiable--- that is, if we accept the implications of Hare's argument. To repeat my point, from his stipulations we must say that any judgment we may make later to suggest that we were wrong in using a particular principle of conduct must be a new value judgment, with a new general principle of conduct, 'determined by a new set of effects'. There is point, then, to the suggestion that particular value judgments may be easier to make than "very general principles", and possibly Stevenson, as well as various intuitionists, had good reason not to concern themselves with 'universal principles' as Hare has done.

We have seen that the principle of conduct of any particular value judgment if used as the major premiss of any argument must be considered as trivial if intended to justify the judgment. What, then, may be said of the use of a 'precept' as a major premiss for such an argument? If the 'precept' precisely verbalizes the principles of conduct of a particular value judgment, then it, like the principle, must be trivial. If it is to be used, then, in any but a trivial sense, it must be more general than the principle of conduct. But this would lead to even greater difficulties. An extreme example which makes this point would be to suggest that the precept "Never say what is false" should be used as the major premiss for a practical syllogism, the minor premiss of which would include the factual data that a lie would probably save my family. If it is objected that this particular example begs the question in appealing to the wrong general principle, then my point, far from being weakened, is in fact reinforced. This point is succinctly expressed by the intuitionist E.F. Carritt, using an argument that could be readily taken over by an emotivist. In opposing the kind of syllogistic procedure

which Hare would revive, he wrote that "a rule can only be general, but an act must be particular, so it will always be necessary to satisfy ourselves that an act comes under the rule, and for this no rule can be given."¹ Extending Carritt's point somewhat further, there is no rule to 'guide our choice' in any particular situation--which may be exceedingly complex--of one or several precepts, or principles of conduct from among the many we have been 'told', and have adopted, in our normal experience. After making a decision about the problem before us, that is to decide about the 'facts' of the situation, we would have to make a decision in accepting a principle, from the principles we have learned, for use as the major premiss of our practical syllogism. But, as Hare has allowed, if we are in doubt about what to do in a particular situation, we will be in doubt about a general principle (or major premiss) which may be applicable in that situation. There is a further problem. If a particular decision is the end result of a syllogistic procedure, then the choice of the principle to serve as a major premiss must itself follow from such a procedure, and so on ad infinitum.² It appears, then, that we are led either to this absurd conclusion, or to the conclusion that the syllogistic procedure (as Hare prescribed it) is trivial.

If my arguments have been more persuasive than Hare's it would appear that he cannot use his 'principle of conduct' as a major premiss for a practical syllogism in any but a trivial sense. If this is so, then the third question proposed (Is the attempt to indicate that there is a correspondence between moral reasoning and the Aristotelian practical

¹Carritt, Theory of Morals, p. 114.

²Cf., E.M. Adams, op.cit., p. 78.

sylllogism a faithful analysis of moral reasoning?) has then been answered to a considerable extent. The further question, whether an imperative may be entailed by the practical syllogism, may be left in abeyance, however, until we consider his later argument. Considering what Hare has said about 'principles of conduct', however, we may say that in view of the apparent difficulties in his argument it would seem preferable, at least for the present, to adopt Stevenson's more agnostic approach, and to use the word "principles" in the sense in which, as I have suggested, it might be interchanged with "attitudes". And since I have argued earlier that Hare has not convincingly established that there is a use of the word "decision" which is to be preferred over Stevenson's use of the word "choice", it may be said, in general, that in the chapter "Decisions of Principle", as in earlier chapters, Hare has not made a convincing case that his analysis is to be preferred over Stevenson's.

What may be said, in summary, of Part I of Hare's book? It was in this part, we recall, that he was to have presented the groundwork for Parts II and III (in which he would deal specifically with the language of morals). "Neglect of the principles enunciated in the first part of this book," he had said, "is the source of many of the most insidious confusions in ethics." He has said in the Preface that his exposition in this book was reduced to about half its original length, and thus he has excluded the "qualifications, answers to minor objections, and other defences with which the security-minded philosopher is apt to hedge himself round." Possibly this is a compression which has led to what have appeared as confusions and vagueness, although, it might also be said, this may have helped to expose basic weaknesses. In any event, if I have interpreted him correctly, his attempt to lay a groundwork has been

a failure.---We have just seen the inadequacies of his most important chapter, "Decisions of Principle". A summary of the three earlier chapters reveals, with two exceptions, the same negative result:

Chapter 1: "Prescriptive Language": His 'rough' classification of prescriptive language was too loose, and he failed to make an adequate distinction between statements and commands. His attempt to set forth imperative analogues or parallels for theories of moral philosophy was both inadequate and incomplete. Thus his arguments against 'naturalism' and 'emotivism' were inadequate. In particular, he ignored the possibility of an analogue for Stevenson's emotivist theory; and, further, his attempt to dissociate himself from emotivism by distinguishing 'telling' and 'persuading' was unconvincing.

Chapter 2: "Imperatives and Logic": A further attempt to distinguish between statements and commands had to be regarded as a failure. Secondly his 'phrastic-neustic' analysis was not only incomplete, but would fail if it were considered as a device to indicate that the 'logical behaviour' of imperatives and value judgments may be considered as corresponding to syllogistic reasoning.

Chapter 3: "Inference": His special rule of 'imperative' inference, which is essentially an Aristotelian rule, may be used independently of the 'phrastic-neustic' analysis. He uses the rule with effect against a limited type of 'Cartesian' theories which assert self-evident principles from which, they say, particular duties may be deduced. While his arguments would leave untouched the most important twentieth century intuitionists who would deny that particular duties may be deduced from general principles, his arguments may be extended to counter any arguments for the 'self-evidence' of either principles or particular duties.

Such arguments would not demonstrate that intuitive 'self-evidence' is impossible, however, and a further 'persuasive' challenge, to demand proof for the possibility of synthetic a priori propositions, would be necessary. These arguments, however, are extensions from Hare's, and if his arguments in Part I are considered not only as prolegomena but as analogues for the analysis of the language of morals, then his failure to deal with these important philosophers is a deficiency. He does deal effectively against the Toulmin-type of theory which suggests that one may argue from a factual basis to an ethical conclusion by means of 'special rules of inference', and this is a positive contribution.

Section 5

The arguments in Part II and in the first chapter of Part III, however, are not entirely dependent on the way in which he has expressed his arguments in Part I. Oddly enough, he acknowledges this in the Preface when he says that in Part II he has not "taken for granted the argument in Part I." If the reader wishes, he suggests, he may consider Part II first. He does not of course suggest that Part I is simply an exercise without relevance to his thesis, for, in the final paragraph of the book, he indicates how he has worked toward a point at which we should "see clearly, how the discussion of the logic of value-words in Parts II and III...is connected with the discussion of the imperative mood in Part I." Occasionally, as we shall see, he establishes links between his arguments in Parts II and III, with those in Part I; and, as we shall also see, criticism of the arguments in Part I may often apply to his later arguments. Since there is somewhat less reason for destructive criticism of Part II and the first chapter of Part III, my approach may be more general than it has been so far. This is not to

suggest that there are no problems, however, and, although I may pass over some minor points, I hope to consider in adequate detail what I take to be his main arguments.

Hare believes that it is important to consider the 'logical behaviour' of the word "good" separately from that of other words such as "right", "ought", and "duty",¹ and his general title for Part II is "Good", whereas the title for Part III is "Ought". Beginning his analysis of value words related to "good", using "good" as typical of all such words, he considers 'naturalistic' attempts to define value words. In his 'parallel' analysis of 'naturalistic' attempts to define imperatives, we recall, his arguments were not convincing and this was primarily because of his inadequate distinction between 'statements' and 'commands'. His argument against 'naturalistic theories of value', however, fares somewhat better and I believe that this is because he focusses attention to a somewhat greater extent than previously on the uses or purposes of descriptive or factual language, on the one hand, and evaluative language on the other. In the earlier arguments, to recall Braithwaite's point, Hare had tended to consider sentences in isolation from their contexts in use. His argument in this chapter, at least in intention, is reminiscent of Stevenson's, that is to say, words used primarily for evaluative purposes have a 'function' which is different from words used primarily for descriptive purposes. It is necessary to state this in this way since, as I have mentioned, Hare has said that "almost every word in our language is capable of being used as a value-word." In Hare's case, the "special function" of value words is that of "commending", and such words, he asserts, "plainly cannot be defined in terms of other words which do not

¹IM, p. 151.

perform this function; for if this is done, we are deprived of a means of performing this function."¹ While the question of the 'function' as 'commending' may be debatable, when the point is expressed in this challenging way it is difficult to consider that a 'naturalist-as-descriptive' theory could stand up to the challenge. But Hare endeavours to make his case by means of his practical syllogism, and this procedure is more questionable than the simple challenge. With his fondness for parallels, he returns to his argument against 'naturalism' later, and since he will then be concerned with "good" in a specifically moral context, I shall discuss it then.

There are, however, two aspects of his theory in this chapter which must be noted since they have a bearing on his subsequent arguments. The first one is that he makes explicit what had tended to be implicit in earlier non-cognitivist theories, and that is that his analysis of value words is a general analysis of values.

"...the peculiarities of these words," he writes, "have nothing to do with morals as such, and...therefore theories which purport to explain them have to be applicable, not only to expressions like 'good man', but also to expressions like 'good chronometer'...."²

As we may expect, his point will be seen to be that they all have the common purpose of 'commending'.

The second point is in his attempt to be more explicit about the difference in 'function' between descriptive and evaluative language.

"One of the most characteristic features of value words," he writes, "...is a feature sometimes described by saying that 'good' and other such words are the names of 'supervenient' or 'consequential' properties."³

In terminology at least this looks suspiciously like a new type of either metaphysical objectivism (for example, the 'right-making' characteristics

¹IM, p. 91.

²IM, p. 80.

³IM, p. 80.

of Ross and other intuitionists), or naturalism; but since Hare's general approach would rule out the former, the latter is suspect. He is aware of this possible charge, however, and later (in Part III)¹ he refers to this doctrine as one which may lead to the allegation that his theory is committed to naturalism. In his introduction of the doctrine his intention is unfortunately obscure, except to suggest that the thing evaluated must have "some one characteristic or group of characteristics...on which the characteristic 'good' is logically dependent"; but this is not helpful, especially since in the opening paragraph of the next chapter he says that the relation between the terms "good-making" characteristics and "good" is "not one of entailment". Since he refers to the 'supervenient' or 'consequential' characteristics in several later passages, however, and since it is not clear what his intention is until close to the end of Part II,² I shall simply note its introduction at this point and leave the problem in abeyance.

In his chapter "Meaning and Criteria", his purpose is to examine comparisons which have been made between the word "good" and "typical simple property-words like 'red'." His argument, he suggests, will also "tell against the theory that 'good' is the name of a complex property...."³ Unfortunately, as I shall indicate, his main argument, that is the argument against the 'good as instrumental' theory, is question-begging. In undertaking this comparison he follows a suggestion from Wittgenstein "that the logical character of words can be investigated by asking how we would explain their meaning...."⁴ In explaining the meaning of "red", Hare suggests, we could use an ostensive approach, pointing to objects which we normally say are red in colour, while saying, on each occasion,

¹LM, p. 173.
³LM, p. 94.

²LM, p. 145.
⁴LM, p. 95.

"That is red". To reinforce the lesson we might then compare objects that are not red, but green, saying each time, "That is red; that is not red, but green". He does not suggest that the meanings of all non-value words might be conveyed either directly or indirectly in this way (he suggests, for example, the word "this", and words used as proper names). His concern, however, is not with these exceptions but with the suggestion that the word "good" is analogous in its logical behaviour to simple or complex property-words.

But the words "good" and "red" can be "applied to any number of different classes of objects", thus he allows that it seems natural to suppose that "good" refers to a "common property", just as "red" does. But such a supposition, he says, is doomed to failure. His argument rests on a theory first clearly expressed by Urmson in his paper "On Grading" (first published in 1950, in Mind.)¹ The word "good", according to Urmson, is a general "grading" word or "grading label", which may apply to a variety of types of things to be 'graded'. Whereas the use (or meaning) of the word may be the same in all contexts, the criteria for its use are different in different contexts. In using this distinction Hare of course says that the general use of "good" is for 'commending' rather than 'grading'. In the use of the word "red," he says, the 'meaning' of the word is not independent of the 'criteria' for its use, whereas in the use of "good", the 'meaning' of the word is independent of its 'criteria'. That is to say, the common and primary 'function' of "good" is to 'commend' on all genuinely evaluative occasions of its use, even though there is nothing in common about the types of situations which we term "good", as there is in our use of "red". In learning how to use the word "good" we do not have to learn how to commend for each new class of objects, although

¹Op.cit., reprinted in Logic and Language (2nd. series), ed. Flew, pp. 159-186.

"learning the criteria for goodness in a new class of objects may be a new lesson each time."¹

With this distinction, and its assumption that "good" has a primary use which is different from words used primarily for descriptive or factual purposes, Hare directs his attention to theories which assert that the 'common property' referred to when we use the word "good" is the 'property' of being 'instrumental' or 'conducive to an end'. (Although he mentions the theory of 'intrinsic good' he does not intend to consider it until later). The most convincing of the 'good as instrumental' theories, he grants, would be one which assumes that "good" means "efficient", that is to say, "conducive to the end that it is used for."² Now while his argument in this context might tell against any crude 'property' theory which suggests that the relation of the alleged 'value property' to the thing judged is analogous to the relation of the property of 'redness' to a thing which is said to be red, I believe that his argument will not hold against an 'instrumental' theory which would rest its case on the claim that "good" means "efficient". This is not to say that there is nothing wrong with a theory which would so delimit the use of the word "good", but rather that Hare's argument against such theories may be turned back against him; and possibly this is indicative of a weakness in his own theory.

His argument against such a theory is not fair since he implicitly denies to the 'instrumental theory' the right of adopting the same distinction between 'meaning' and 'criteria' which he assumes in dismissing that 'instrumental' view. This becomes apparent when one considers the same kind of situation as illustrated by Hare for his purposes, while

¹IM, p. 97.

²IM, p. 99.

presupposing the 'good as instrumental' point of view (rather than, as he presupposes, the 'good as commending' thesis). This consideration is not difficult since--and this may be the source of the problem--all of his examples in this context are objects which are used instrumentally, such as fire-extinguishers, chronometers, cricket-bats, and augers. If we were to teach his hypothetical 'foreigner' the use of the word "good" in the instrumental sense we could use Hare's approach, with the same instruments. Now his main objection to the 'good as instrumental' theory is that in each new type of situation we would have to teach the 'foreigner' something about the 'end' to be achieved if we wished to teach him to use the word to mean "efficient" or "conducive to an end".

"For unless we can teach him, in the case of any new class of objects, to recognize without assistance for what end they are being used, we shall still have to go on giving him a new lesson each time, though it will not be about the word 'good' but about the word 'end'."¹

In Hare's theory, on the other hand, he suggests, once we learn that "good" is used primarily for commending, we do not have to learn its 'meaning' in each new type of situation---although we do have to learn new criteria. An advocate for the 'good as instrumental' theory, however, might well query the suggestion that the 'foreigner' could not just as readily grasp the meaning of "instrumental good" or "good as efficient" in one lesson (this being Hare's test in support of his own 'good as commending' theory). Adopting an Aristotelian approach, as Hare does for an opposed purpose, I might, for example, try to teach not only the word "good" but all of its range of comparatives, from the ultimate "best" to the negative "worst", by having a series of knives with varying degrees of sharpness. By using the appropriate words when I try to carve a piece

¹LM, p. 99.

of wood, I could teach the use of these words, as Hare must allow. With that one lesson the 'foreigner' could learn how to use the words and would be able to use them appropriately in other types of situations in which 'instrumental' objects are being used. Whether or not he had to be taught the 'ends' of other types of activities is not a relevant consideration, for, adopting the distinction between 'meaning' and 'criteria', the 'ends' may be considered as 'criteria'. The central problem now is whether the 'foreigner' would take from his lesson either the experience which may be expressed as, "I understand; I am to use the word 'good' to refer to activities and things which are effective in fulfilling the purpose for which they are used"; or, Hare's view, "I understand; the word 'good' is to be used to commend". How is one to resolve this difference?

At this point an advocate for the 'intrinsic good' theory (among others ready to join the issue) might suggest a plague on both houses. There is no way to resolve this conflict, he might suggest, so long as both Hare and the 'instrumental' theorist choose examples like chronometers, augers, and Urmson's apples, which may be regarded primarily in terms of specific purposes for which they are used. Consider, however, other examples of our use of "good", such as when speaking of St. Francis,¹ when our concern is not with him as an 'instrument' but simply as a good man--a man of the past at that--whom we find praiseworthy. The 'intrinsic good' theorist might even go further, to suggest that Hare's fundamental mistake is in assuming that there is no difference in 'logical behaviour' between "good" in moral uses and in non-moral uses. Hare is of course aware of this possible charge and later considers it in more detail; thus we must suspend judgment until then. It may be said, never-

¹Cf., LM, pp. 142-5.

theless, that his specific argument against the 'good as instrumental' theory is in itself inadequate.

There is in this chapter another aspect of his theory which should be noted since it indicates a further difference between his view and Stevenson's. After saying that the word "good" has "a constant meaning" in that it is always used for commending, he then says that it is possible to know the meaning of "a good shmakum"¹ without knowing any of the criteria for the goodness of shmakums. This is succinctly summarized in the next chapter when he says that "we can know the meaning of 'good strawberry' without knowing any" of "the characteristics that make a strawberry a good one, or what is the standard of goodness in strawberries."² Now while Stevenson would allow that the word "good" has a primary use (an 'emotive' or 'dynamic' use) he would say that when it is used to refer to specific objects and people its 'emotive meaning', although relatively stable, does not remain constant. In the sense that the word is always used 'emotively' or 'dynamically', Stevenson might well say that the word itself has a constant meaning; but it would be trivial to suggest that one could know the meaning of "good strawberry" independently of one's past experience in relation to strawberries. When Hare says that we know the 'meaning' of, say, "good shmakum", what he is saying is "a good shmakum is a shmakum we would commend", which is a tautology. It says nothing as such about 'shmakums', but it does tell us how Hare would use the word "good". This appears to be a further illustration of Braithwaite's suggestion that Hare tends to consider language as isolated from its context in use.

In the first two paragraphs of his chapter "Description and Evalu-

¹LM, p. 104.

²LM, p. 111.

ation" Hare establishes another link between Part II and Part I, in this instance specifically with his chapter on "Inference". Assuming that we may distinguish between descriptive and evaluative sentences, he suggests, as Stevenson had suggested, that descriptive statements "are often given as a reason" for making value judgments. Hare goes on, however, to say that a descriptive sentence "does not by itself entail" an evaluative sentence. Stevenson, following Hume, would say that a descriptive sentence does not logically entail an evaluative sentence at all. Hare's qualifying phrase, "by itself", is suspicious; and the suspicion is borne out when he writes, "Yet there seems to be some close logical connexion between them", and then poses for himself the problem, "What is this connexion?"

"The problem," he writes, "may also be put in this way: if we knew all the descriptive properties which a particular strawberry had (knew, of every descriptive sentence relating to the strawberry, whether it was true or false), and if we knew also the meaning of the word 'good', then what else would we require to know, in order to be able to tell whether a strawberry was a good one?"¹

To an advocate for Stevenson, Hare's posing the question in this way would seem nonsensical, since, he would argue, the knowledge of all of the 'descriptive properties' of the strawberry would be sufficient to stimulate a response based on dispositional 'attitudes' one has acquired in past experience. The manner of posing the problem also, of course, presupposes the troublesome thesis that there is either an implicit or explicit deductive inference in the making of value judgments. He briefly reveals that thesis in what he goes on to say. Considering the 'descriptive properties' as the minor premiss of his practical syllogism, and the conclusion that the strawberry is either a good or bad one, the something more we should

¹LM, p. 111.

require to know, he says, "are the criteria in virtue of which a strawberry is to be called a good one....We should require to be given the major premiss."

Having briefly introduced this link between Parts I and II, Hare uses it to examine more closely the minor and major premisses of his practical syllogism, in other words, 'description' and 'evaluation'. In the remainder of this chapter his exposition of 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' uses of words is, with one exception, not essentially different from Stevenson's; and much of what he says is dependent on the later-Wittgenstein doctrine that a word may have a variety of uses at one and the same time. Like Stevenson, he asserts that the descriptive meaning of "good" is secondary to its evaluative meaning, and, also, he expresses a view which he acknowledges to be similar to Stevenson's theory of 'persuasive definitions'.¹

Stevenson would probably object, however, to the suggestion that the 'function' of the descriptive meaning of "good" could be "performed equally well if 'good' had no commendatory function at all."² To illustrate this point Hare suggests that we might coin a new word, "doog", which could be used to refer to the descriptive criteria which we have formerly employed as criteria for our use of "good". In saying this, however, he appears to assume that "criteria" for goodness may be accepted or rejected 'at will', so to speak. An advocate for Stevenson, however, would likely suggest that 'descriptive criteria' being what they are, and we being what we are, we would shortly be using the word "doog" with all of the evaluative meaning which had been associated with "good". In this passage, as in so many others, Hare seems to presuppose his non-

¹LM, p. 119.

²LM, p. 116.

deterministic or non-causal theory of decision. The passage may also be taken as a further illustration of Braithwaite's point that Hare tends to consider language in isolation from its context in use.

He does extend the analysis of descriptive language somewhat further than Stevenson, and, in what would be a minor expression of disagreement, he points out that descriptive words as well as value words (considered only in terms of their descriptive meaning) can vary considerably in vagueness. Stevenson had suggested that although words used for descriptive purposes may be vague, words used for evaluative purposes are more vague.¹ In expressing this Hare reveals his humanistic beliefs about the basis of morality.

"Words in both classes may be descriptively loose or exact," he says, "according to how rigidly the criteria have been laid down by custom or convention."²

And on the preceding page he had said that "the standard of goodness, like the meaning of 'red', is normally something which is public and commonly accepted."

The guiding theme for the chapter "Commending and Choosing" is "to inquire into the reasons for the logical features of 'good'...and to ask why it is that it has this peculiar combination of evaluative and descriptive meaning." The answer to this question, Hare suggests, "will be found in the purposes for which it, like other value-words, is used in our discourse."³ Now Hare does not question his hypothesis that the primary function of the word "good" is to commend; and, as I have mentioned earlier, and must discuss later, some critics see this as a limitation of his theory. Explicitly accepting 'commending' as the unquestioned primary function he goes on to the next question, "to inquire what

¹EL, p. 35.

²LM, p. 115.

³LM, p. 126.

commending is." His reply is direct. "When we commend or condemn anything," he writes, "it is always in order, at least indirectly, to guide choices, our own or other people's, now or in the future." In other contexts throughout his book he uses as synonyms for "commending" or "prescribing", the following terms: "guiding actions", "regulating our conduct", "giving advice or instruction", and "the teaching of standards". The point of his argument in relating commending to choosing is that "critical value judgments...would not be made if they were not so related...." Many traditional moral philosophers have maintained that there is no purpose in making moral judgments if we are not free to choose, and this of course supposes that the people we judge are or were free to choose when they acted. Hare takes this point further: there is no point in making value judgments unless our purpose in making them is to guide choices. Hare's thesis immediately suggests queries which could be more easily handled by the traditional approach. The traditionalist might ask, "What about the praising of good men, now or in the past?". Since the guiding of choices must refer to the future, what is the point in judging choices which have already been made? Hare answers that "we should not speak of good men unless we had the choice, what sort of men to try to become." Although this might seem to serve about judgments in the past in general, Hare has more to say.

"...even judgments about past choices do not refer merely to the past. As we shall see, all value-judgments are covertly universal in character, which is the same as to say that they refer to, and express acceptance of, a standard which has an application to other similar instances."¹

Here we see his introduction in the language of values to the analogue he had introduced in his discussion of 'universal imperative principles'

¹LM, p. 129.

in his chapter "Decisions of Principle". As I have mentioned earlier, he has said that the earlier chapter could have been couched in terms of value judgments; and that statement comes at the end of the chapter we are now considering. The two chapters are related more directly by the following passage:

"To commend...is to guide choices. Now for guiding a particular choice we have a linguistic instrument which is not that of commendation, namely the singular imperative."¹

In an earlier chapter, however, (as I have argued)² he dismissed in peremptory manner the possibility of an analysis of singular imperatives (which might have been analogous to Stevenson's theory), and his purpose now becomes clearer. A value judgment, he says, is not in its logical behaviour like a singular imperative, such as "Take that one", spoken of a car, with no thought of its kind or condition. If I say of a particular car "That is a good one" I am saying something more. "I am implying that if any motor-car were just like that one", he writes "it would be a good one too...." Hare extends the "implication" even further.

"...the implication of the judgment 'That is a good motor-car' does not extend merely to motor-cars exactly like that one. If this were so, the implication would be for practical purposes useless; for nothing is exactly like anything else. It extends to every motor-car that is like that one in the relevant particulars; and the relevant particulars are its virtues---those of its characteristics for which I was commending it, or which I was calling good about it."³

These "relevant particulars" or "virtues" are related to the "supervenient or consequential characteristics" which he had introduced earlier. They are, he suggests, the descriptive features which we select or choose to which we attach the "'supervenient' or 'consequential' epithet... 'good'."

There are three main problems which come to a head in this chapter, but since two of them are better left until later I shall simply state

¹LM, p. 129.

²Cf. above, p. 200 ff.

³LM, p. 130.

them and discuss only the third. First, there is the assumption I have mentioned earlier that value-judgments, if they are action-guiding, must be held to entail "imperatives". Secondly, related to the second question but distinguishable from it is the consideration of the thesis that the primary 'function' of value judgments is to commend. Thirdly, remembering Hare's peremptory dismissal of 'singular imperatives' as analogues to possible ethical theories, as well as my criticism of his chapter "Decisions of Principle", is it not possible to say, as intuitionists and emotivists do, that particular value judgments may be made without logically implying anything about another thing or person beyond the particular one judged?

It is unnecessary to treat this third question in more than summary fashion, since two of the arguments I have used in assessing the chapter "Decisions of Principle" hold also for his discussion of value judgments. (Other aspects of my earlier criticism are more appropriately held until later.) The points I had made which are now of relevance are as follows. First, it is not clear what he meant by "decision",¹ and the same criticism holds for "choosing". His use of the word presupposes the argument to distinguish between 'telling' and 'persuading', and that argument was unconvincing. His argument appears to presuppose the 'freewill versus determinism' controversy in assuming that 'decisions' and 'causes' are free from causes, but as Stevenson had argued, such a presupposition would invite more trouble than it would avoid. There is no apparent merit, then, in his intended use of the word (whatever that intention may be) over Stevenson's 'dispositional' use of "choice". Secondly, in employing an argumentum ad hominem against his thesis, I had asked how general

¹Above, p. 248.

or 'universal' his principle of conduct could be?¹ This question may now be asked, with his blessing,² of his "principles for choosing motor-cars". My conclusion was, and is now, that there are no logical grounds for saying that the maxim or principle of my particular action or choice may imply a principle as a major premiss which is more general than that maxim. Thus any major premiss must be trivial: to say otherwise leads to an infinite regress of practical syllogisms for the purpose of choosing principles.

In the last chapter of Part II, "'Good' in Moral Contexts", Hare considers the inevitable objections to a theory which postulates that the logical behaviour of "good" is the same in non-moral as in moral contexts. His main argument to support his view is to displace both the 'good as instrumental' and 'good as intrinsic' theories. We have already seen that his earlier argument against those who would assert a 'good as instrumental' theory is inadequate. We must now consider whether he has more to say that would now convincingly displace both theories. A supporter of the 'intrinsic' theory, he suggests, would define this theory as follows:

"...because there are some objects which are commended for their own sakes, and do not have an obvious function beyond their own existence, to commend such an object is to do something quite different from commending an object which does have a function."³

His method "to avoid" either of these views, he says, is to avail himself "of the general notions of 'virtue' and 'standard'" which he has been using. By "virtues", as we have seen, Hare means "the relevant particulars" among descriptive characteristics for which we commend something. The word "standard" is used to refer to a "list of virtues". When we keep this distinction in mind, he suggests, we will be aware that there is no difference in the 'logical behaviour' of "a list of virtues"

¹Above, p. 257.

²LM, p. 134.

³LM, p. 137.

referring to an object which we commend for its instrumental performance of a function, and the "list of virtues" for an object which we commend, as it were, for its own sake. If the "list of virtues" in one case does not 'differ logically' from the other, then, he concludes, there is no essential difference in our acts of commending each type of 'object'.

It is not my present purpose to argue that he is wrong in assuming that the word "good" has the same logical behaviour in both contexts; but, it must be said, his argument in support of his view is inadequate. He says nothing in this later context which would undo my earlier criticism of his argument against the 'good as instrumental' theory; thus one may yet wonder if his supposition that "good" is used for commending does justice to the suggestion that it may also be used for 'grading' the efficiency of something considered in an instrumental capacity. Now, in the later context, in his argument to suggest that there is no essential difference between the 'instrumental' and the 'intrinsic' views, he is less than fair to the 'intrinsic' view. The argument is less than fair for two reasons: first, that the example (referring to the 'intrinsic goodness', as well as the 'instrumental goodness', of a bath) is not a specifically moral example---by choosing a non-moral example he might well be 'loading' the argument against the 'intrinsic' theory; and, secondly, it is an example which is more appropriate for illustrating the 'good as instrumental' view. That is to say, despite his suggestion, it cannot convincingly be considered as more than an example of 'instrumental goodness'. This becomes apparent by a closer consideration of his example.

"A good bath is good both instrumentally (in that it is conducive to cleanliness) and intrinsically (for we should not have nearly so many baths if our only purpose in having them were to become clean).¹

¹LM, p. 138.

He then goes on to provide "a standard or list of virtues" for an intrinsically good bath, such as that it "must be within a certain range of temperature, which must be maintained throughout the duration; the vessel must be above a certain minimum size, which varies with that of the bather;" and so on. All of this argument, however, depends for its force on his assumption (which is explicitly stated in the preceding quotation) that the only purpose of having a bath is to become clean. That is to say, he assumes that on any occasion when one has a bath not for the purpose of becoming clean, then the bath is not to be considered as 'instrumental'. The popularity of spas suggests that there are other definite and publicly accepted purposes. Speaking introspectively, as Hare does in his example, I often bath for the purpose of relaxing, sometimes for the purpose of 'waking myself up', and sometimes during hot summer days for the purpose of 'cooling myself off'. And these purposes are as recognizable as the occasions when I bath to become clean. The most vague purpose for which I may take a bath, I suppose, is when I say, simply, "I'd like to have a bath", and this is possibly what Hare has in mind when he speaks of the 'intrinsic goodness' of a bath. But if I were asked 'why?' on such occasions, I believe I could state a purpose for which the bath would be 'instrumental'---even if it is expressed in such phrases as "Simply because I would like a bath", or "Because I would enjoy it", and so on. This could only be denied if one could maintain that anything that satisfied a 'want' may not be considered as 'instrumental' in satisfying that want. This is not necessarily to presuppose an introspective view of 'wants', although, as Stevenson had suggested, it is possible that one must also consider introspection in the analyses of ethical terms---even though he tended to adopt the behaviouristic approach which could also provide an analysis for the word "want" among other such

words.¹

After his argument to 'avoid' the 'intrinsic' and the 'instrumental' theories, Hare considers three reasons "that have led people to hold that the use of the word 'good' in moral contexts is totally different from its use in non-moral ones."² The first one he mentions, however, is the suggestion we have just considered, that a distinction may be made between the 'intrinsic' and the 'instrumental' theories, and, as he says in dismissing this reason, "we have already dealt with it". In view of the inadequacy of his argument, however, the possibility remains that the 'good as intrinsic' theorist would wish to insist (just as would the 'good as instrumental' theorist) that there may be a use of the word "good" which is not adequately considered in Hare's manner of expressing his 'good as commending' theory.

The second reason he considers is that "the properties which make a man morally good are obviously different from those which make a chronometer good." In this instance his argument rests on his thesis that while the word "good" as applied to man and chronometer will differ, the evaluative meaning is the same---"in both cases we are commending". If it could be argued, however, that there are other purposes served by our use of "good"--that is to say that there is more than one evaluative meaning of the word--then it is possible that some philosophers might have more grounds than Hare supposes for distinguishing between the logical behaviour of "good" in moral and non-moral contexts. This question must be left in abeyance until we consider other possible analyses of "good".

The third reason he considers is that "it is felt somehow 'moral

¹Cf., Stevenson, EL, p. 3.

²IM, p. 140.

goodness' is more august, more important, and therefore deserves to have a logic all its own." Stated in this way, with the value terms "august", "important" and "deserves" plain for all to see, it would be difficult not to agree with him. He does not dismiss this view without consideration, however, for he grants that the fact that our moral judgments may "deeply affect the lives of our neighbours...is enough to explain the peculiar place that we assign to them."

"If we add to this the logical point..." he continues, "that moral judgments always have a possible bearing on our own conduct, in that we cannot in the fullest sense accept them without conforming to them...then no further explanation is needed of the special status of morals."¹

In a parenthetical note he says that he will be discussing this view in more detail in Part III. In the meantime he simply asserts that "this special status does not require a special logic to back it up", and he reasserts his hypothesis that in all of our uses of "good", whether in referring to our own actions or those of others, our use for it is to 'commend'.

In this argument Hare once more expresses disagreement with an 'emotivist' analysis of evaluative language.

"We may add," he writes, "that the 'emotivity' of much moral utterance, which some have thought to be of the essence of evaluative language, is only a symptom--and a most unreliable one--of an evaluative use of words. Moral language is frequently emotive, simply because the situations in which it is typically used are situations about which we feel deeply. One of the chief uses of the comparison which I have been drawing between moral and non-moral language is to make it clear that the essential logical feature of value-words can be present where the emotions are not markedly involved."²

The fact that Stevenson could quite well agree that "the essential logical features of value-words can be present where the emotions are not markedly involved" is indicative of the fact that Hare, in this instance, has

¹LM, p. 143; Cf., also p.162.

²LM, p. 144.

cited a primitive version of the 'emotivist' theory.

Finally, to reinforce his claim that there is no difference in the logical behaviour of "good" in moral and non-moral contexts, he considers an example, not of baths and chronometers, but of a "good man". In doing so he makes a distinction which might seem at first sight to meet the objections I have expressed for the 'good as intrinsic' theorist. We must remember, Hare says, that "clearly 'man' in 'good man' is not normally a functional word, and never so when moral commendation is being given."¹ We may recall, however, that he has said that our purpose in making value judgments about a man, even a man of the past, is to guide actions and choices in the present and future. This, as I have suggested, is a limited view and I hope to make this clear after discussing his analysis of "ought" in Part III.

A question which obviously disturbs Hare concerns the possibility that his theory might be said to be committed to naturalism. The possibility was first suggested when he introduced the notion of 'supervenient' or 'consequential' characteristics.² On that occasion he had been concerned with "good" in a non-moral context. Now, in a moral context, he asks if the 'logical behaviour' remains the same as he had earlier suggested. He begins his 'parallel' by introducing a conclusion ("St. Francis was a good man") from his presupposed practical syllogism. Then, with reference to the minor premiss of the syllogism he writes the following:

"...it is logically impossible to say this (i.e. "St. Francis was a good man") and to maintain at the same time that there might have been another man placed in precisely the same circumstances as St. Francis, and who behaved in exactly the same way, but who differed from St. Francis in this respect only, that he was not a good man."³

¹IM, p. 145.

²Above, p. 266.

³IM, p. 145.

Why, he asks, would this be a logical impossibility? This could be explained if the word "good" were precisely defined in 'naturalistic' or 'descriptive' terms. But such a procedure, he suggests, would not retain the moral 'function' of the word "good".

"...it is not the case," he continues, "that there is any conjunction C of descriptive characteristics such that to say that a man has C entails that he is morally good. For, if this were the case, we should be unable to commend any man for having those characteristics, we should only be able to say that he had them."

Hare's point might have been more clearly expressed, since the naturalist would probably insist (that is if he, for the sake of argument, adopted Hare's syllogistic procedure) that one could draw a conclusion that man is 'morally good'. Hare's point, however, is that while I may draw a conclusion in which the word "good" appears, I would be using the word only in a descriptive sense: it would be devoid of its evaluative meaning.

"Nevertheless," he continues, "the judgment that a man is morally good is not logically independent of the judgment that he has certain other characteristics which we may call virtues or good-making characteristics; there is a relation between them, although it is not one of entailment or of identity of meaning."

The missing factor, as we might expect, is the major premiss of the practical syllogism. Hare expresses the relation between the moral judgment and the factual judgment as follows:

"It is that a statement of the characteristics of the man (the minor or factual premiss) together with a specification of a standard for judging men morally (the major premiss) entails a moral judgment upon him."¹

He intends, then, that the "specification of a standard", the acceptance or choice, that is, of a list of descriptive characteristics to which we apply the supervenient epithet "good", thus to dub them "virtues", adds, as it were, the necessary 'neustic' element or evaluative meaning to the

¹LM, pp. 145-6.

sylllogism. Thus, he suggests, we are warranted in concluding that the man is morally good. With this conclusion, we do not simply describe a man, we commend him; and our act of commending him is the primary purpose served by our value judgment.---But this argument depends on one's accepting his central thesis that all genuinely evaluative reasoning is either explicitly or implicitly syllogistic in form. Without his use of the practical syllogism, as I have suggested earlier, there would seem to be no problem in displacing any 'naturalistic' theory which defined "good" in descriptive terms. Like Stevenson he might simply have displaced naturalism by indicating that the word "good" serves a purpose beyond that of describing. With the practical syllogism, however, at least as he uses it, he unnecessarily complicates the problem.

Section 6

In turning to Part III of the book I shall consider two main problems which yet remain: first, there is the "assumption, hitherto not fully defended, that value-judgments, if they are action-guiding, must be held to entail imperatives";¹ and, secondly, the related problem, is it an adequate generalization to say that the primary 'function' of value judgments is to 'commend' or 'prescribe' or 'to guide choices and actions'?

In the first chapter of Part III (the chapter entitled "'Ought' and 'Right'"), he distinguishes between the word "good", on the one hand, and, on the other, the moral words such as "right", "ought", and "duty". His analysis to indicate that there is a distinction is simply an extension of Stevenson's and we need not consider it further. After making the distinction, however, he again relies on a 'parallel' form of argument

¹IM, p. 163.

to suggest (as Stevenson had done) that the 'logical behaviour' of these words as value words is similar. Thus the arguments which I have used to indicate inadequacies in his analysis of "good" (such arguments as those concerning 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' values, and the 'supervenient' characteristics of value words) may be carried over into his analysis of "ought" and "right". Now in my arguments I have cast doubt on his application of the practical syllogism in moral reasoning. I have indicated in particular that there must be doubt about the major premiss, and thus indeed about the entire syllogism as he uses it. I had argued that in one way of considering it we would be led into an infinite regress in choices of principles for deciding principles, and, in the other way, its use could be no more than trivial. It may be asked, nevertheless, if value judgments, "if they are action-guiding, must be held to entail imperatives?"

Within the assumption as Hare states it there is of course the controversial hypothetical clause "if they are action-guiding", and, as I shall indicate later, this is a limited use of value judgments. If we accept, however, that possibly one of the 'functions' of value judgments is, in some sense, to guide actions, then we may isolate Hare's claim that, therefore, they "must be held to entail imperatives."

There is, unfortunately, a circularity in Hare's argument. The argument rests, in part, on his establishing that not all sentences containing the terms "good", "ought", and so on, entail imperatives. "It is possible," he suggests, "for people who have acquired very stable standards of values to come to treat value-judgments more and more as purely descriptive, and to let their evaluative force get weaker." It would be difficult to quarrel with this, he goes on, however, to suggest that it is possible to use value terms as if they had no evaluative

meaning whatever. The value judgment, he says, "gets into inverted commas". Now this is debatable since it could hardly be made by inspection or introspection. The circularity begins at this point, since it is apparent that in making this distinction he presupposes a criterion or definition for distinguishing value judgments. He allows, in any event, that when value judgments are used in 'inverted commas' it is possible to make such a statement as, "You ought to go and call on the So-and-so's, but don't." Such a sentence, he says, does not entail an imperative since the 'value' term in it is not being used evaluatively.

"It will subsequently become apparent," he continues, "that I am making this true by definition, for I should not say that an 'ought'-sentence was being used evaluatively unless imperatives were held to follow from it."¹

Presupposing the definition, Hare thus provides a naturalistic analysis of two classes of sentences which use "ought" in either a 'consciously or unconsciously inverted commas' sense. That first sense, as we have just seen, involves a recognition of "accepted standards", and a sentence using "ought" in this sense is, according to Hare, a "statement of sociological fact". A naturalistic analysis of "I ought to do X", in this sense, becomes his Type (1) sentence, "X is required in order to conform to the standard which people generally accept."²

The second 'inverted commas' sense has to do with "feelings of obligation". Hare accepted it as a "psychological fact" that we do have such feelings, and that these are based (largely, I assume he would have to say, although I am not sure what he thinks) on our upbringing and environment. Such feelings are aroused in two ways: "If we fail to obey it (a principle), we suffer remorse, when we do obey it, we feel at ease with ourselves."³ Now it is possible, he suggests, that we could

¹LM, p. 164.

²LM, p. 167.

³LM, p. 165.

make a statement based entirely on these feelings, and he gives as an example, the (Type 2) sentence, "I have a feeling that I ought to do X". Such a statement, he says, would be completely descriptive, and if we use "ought" in this way it does not entail imperatives. Thus if I happen to say, "I felt that I ought not to have done it, but I did it just the same", Hare would not accept this as an objection to his thesis, for in this use "ought" is not used evaluatively. Like his analysis of the Type (1) sense, however, his analysis suggesting a clear distinction between sentences based on feelings of obligation and those based on an alleged obligation itself, is impossible to maintain unless he has presupposed a criterion or definition.

By means, then, of his presupposed definition he has provided an analysis of three types of sentences which use the word "ought". Types (1) and (2), being descriptive or naturalistic sentences, do not entail imperatives; whereas Type (3), "I ought to do X", does entail imperatives since it is used in a legitimate evaluative sense.

The paradoxical nature of this theory should not go unnoticed. In other words, if I act simply in accordance with the "accepted standards" or in terms of my "feelings of obligation" I have made no genuine value judgment. Extrapolating from what he has said elsewhere I assume that his objection to alleged decisions from these bases would be said to be 'caused' whereas the 'decisions of principle' must be in some sense uncaused. The crucial case to decide whether a statement such as "I ought to do X" is a legitimate value judgment, Hare says, "comes when we are wondering whether to make a value-decision which is in disagreement with the accepted standards or with our own moral feelings...."¹

¹LM, p. 168.

In this passage the argument is again reminiscent of Kant's attempt to distinguish between actions done from duty and those done from inclination.¹ Hare, like Kant, thus must acknowledge that most of our actions which are generally acknowledged to be morally good cannot legitimately be so labelled, however beneficial to humanity they may seem to be. Now this is paradoxical not only for what it explicitly says, but also for what it implies. Possibly in his concern for moral goodness and rightness Hare, like Kant, has neglected moral badness and wrongness. Part of the paradox, that is, is that most of the people and actions which we normally judge to be evil and wrong cannot be said to be legitimately evil and wrong. Hitler's acts of genocide may be thus as morally neutral as the acts of St. Francis.

The question inevitably emerges, how do I know when I am making a legitimate value judgment? How is it possible to maintain that the word "ought" in my sentence "I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and I have done those things which I ought not to have done" is not a legitimate value word? Hare's answer, as might be expected from the manner in which the distinctions were made, is that "cases which are alleged to be value-judgments not entailing imperatives will always on examination be found to be cases" of the use of "ought" in the naturalistic 'inverted commas' sense. He then goes on candidly to acknowledge that "this contention is, of course, impossible to prove or even to render plausible, unless we know when we are to count a judgment as of type (3)." Thus he introduces the definition which he has presupposed in making the distinctions in the first place.

"...I propose to get over this difficulty," he writes, "in the only possible way, by making it a matter of definition. I

¹Groundwork, p. 66 (Paton tr.).

propose to say that the test, whether someone is using the judgment 'I ought to do X' as a value judgment or not is, 'Does he or does he not recognize that if he assents to the judgment, he must also assent to the command 'Let me do X'?'¹

Then he adds the following disclaimer.

"Thus I am not here claiming to prove anything substantial about the way in which we use language; I am merely suggesting a terminology which, if applied to the study of moral language, will, I am satisfied, prove illuminating."

The challenge, then, is either to offer a better definition, or to indicate that this definition is not satisfactory.

I have already indicated that there is a circularity involved in his making the distinctions between the three types of statements in the first place. Possibly this would not be a vicious circularity, however, if the definition could be re-applied and could be proven satisfactory. Unfortunately as M.C. McGuire has convincingly argued in his article "Where has Hare gone wrong?",² Hare complicates the problem further in his efforts to support his definition. Hare seeks, that is, "to show that but, for the existence" of the evaluative sense of "ought", "none of the familiar troubles generated by the word would arise."³ What, then, are the familiar troubles? His argument is in two main parts. First, he analyses the two types of naturalistic sentences which contain the word "ought" in an 'inverted commas' sense. These are statements of fact, he says, since if they are analytically expanded the word "ought" in them "always occurs in inverted commas or inside a subordinate clause beginning with 'that'." Thus, he argues, if the Type (1) sentence were further paraphrased it might be: "There is a principle of conduct which people generally accept, which says 'One ought to do X in circumstances of a certain kind'; and I am now in circumstances of that kind." The same

¹LM, p. 168; Cf. also p. 20.
³LM, p. 170.

²Mind, LXX, 1961, pp. 400-404.

may be said to apply to Type (2) sentences. The crux of his argument is now seen in the following passage:

"Now the fact, that when (1) and (2) are expanded the original judgment which they paraphrase occurs within them inside inverted commas, shows that there must be some sense of that original judgment which is not exhausted by (1) and (2); for if there were not, the sentence in the inverted commas would have in its turn to be paraphrased by (1) and (2), and we should be involved in an infinite regress."¹

As McGuire suggests, however, this part of the argument presupposes that there is an evaluative sense of "ought". When Hare places "ought" in 'inverted commas', that is, he does so because he assumes that it is not a completely descriptive word; and, for him, this lingering evaluative sense becomes apparent when he provides his expanded paraphrases. In his expanded paraphrase for the Type (1) sentences, for example, he offers the sentence, "There is a principle of conduct which people generally accept, which says 'One ought to do X in circumstances of a certain kind'; and I am now in circumstances of that kind." Now there is no necessity for the naturalist to accept this form of an expanded paraphrase. Hare thus begs the question for his own point of view by re-introducing the word "ought"---although, in arguing to make his distinctions between types of sentences in the first place he had removed the "ought" from his Type (1) analysis. The naturalist might well follow Hare's earlier lead, by replacing the word "ought" with his own naturalistic definition of the word, and offering a different form of expanded paraphrase. For the sake of argument, he might take the definition from Hare's Type (1) analysis; and thus, as his expanded paraphrase, offer the naturalistic statement, "There is a principle of conduct which people generally accept which says that conformity to the accepted

¹LM, p. 170.

standard requires that I do X". There is no need, even, for the use of inverted commas. Now Hare, ironically, cannot quarrel with this suggestion, for, as we shall see, when he offers the second part of his argument he grants this possibility. One might argue, then, as McGuire maintains, that the first part of Hare's argument in support of his claim that there is a genuinely evaluative sense of "ought", rests on the presupposition that there is a genuinely evaluative sense of "ought". Hare's own presuppositions, the naturalist might add, are responsible for the 'familiar troubles'.

What, then, might be said for the second part of his argument when he considers Type (3) sentences, in which "ought" is used in a legitimately evaluative sense---the sense, that is, which is alleged to entail imperatives. He supposes, for the sake of argument, that Type (3) sentences can be analysed naturalistically. Thus he grants the case I have just stated for the naturalist's point of view. Now if Type (3) can be analysed naturalistically, he allows, "then these puzzles would not arise in the cases of (1) or (2)...it would be possible to affect a completely naturalistic analysis of all uses of 'ought' and thus of 'good'." Why, then, is this not possible? Hare replies as follows:

"The fact that this is not possible is entirely due to the intractably evaluative character of (3). It is due ultimately to the impossibility, mentioned earlier, of deriving imperatives from indicatives; for (3), by definition, entails at least one imperative; but if (3) were analysable naturalistically, this would mean that it was equivalent to a series of indicative sentences; and this would constitute a breach of the principle established."¹

The phrase "mentioned earlier" refers back to the passage in Part I in which he had introduced his special rule for imperatives ("No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not

¹LM, p. 171.

contain at least one imperative"). But this rule is of no use at present unless it can be said that the value judgment, Type (3), is or entails an imperative, and our only support for that is Hare's stipulated definition that a judgment is not evaluative unless it entails an imperative. McGuire succinctly brings together the two parts of Hare's argument in the following summary:

"If it is a fact that in some of its uses, 'I ought' entails an imperative, then it is these uses which account for the impossibility of a naturalistic analysis. The argument however does not establish it as a fact that any such uses exist. From the premises that (1) if 'I ought' entailed at least one imperative we could not analyse 'I ought' naturalistically, and (2) we can not analyse 'I ought' naturalistically,---it does not follow that 'I ought' entails at least one imperative. The inference 'if p then q, and q, therefore p', is not valid. Hare's argument, therefore, in no way supports the proposition that if a man sincerely assents to 'I ought to do X' he logically must assent to 'Let me do X' and a fortiori can not support the proposition that if a man sincerely assents to 'I ought'... he logically must do it."¹

Even though Hare's argument has been shown to be circular and invalid, the argument against him may be said to be ad hominem and does not necessarily destroy the thesis that assenting to a value judgment entails assenting to an imperative sentence derivable from it. Can anything be made, then, ^{of} if the suggestion that assenting, for example, to the judgment "I ought to do X" entails assent to an imperative "Let me do X"?² Let us suppose for the sake of argument that the word "assent" is being used, as Hare intends, in precisely the same way when referring to the moral judgment as it does when referring to the imperative (although this is a debatable point).³ To assent is to make a 'decision of principle' and thus it is a legitimate procedure to ask for 'reasons' or 'criteria' for assenting in each case. Now since we are speaking of

¹McGuire, op.cit., p. 401.

²Cf. LM, p. 187, where Hare recognizes the oddness of a first person singular imperative.

³McGuire, op.cit., p. 402.

entailing, the man who assents to the imperative must recognize the same criteria or reasons which he recognizes and accepts when he assents to the value judgment. This is to say, then, that the same inferential procedure, with the same premisses, is being employed when arriving at the conclusions both to assent to the value judgment and to assent to the imperative. To suggest that the criteria for a man's assenting to the value judgment and assenting to the imperative may be different would introduce factors into the premisses of the inferential procedure which could lead only to indecision. The only point of difference is, then, in some way associated with the two sentences "I ought to do X" and "I shall do X". Now if all other factors in the inferential procedures (in Hare's case the practical syllogism) leading to both acts of assent (or is it one act?) are precisely the same, how are we to distinguish between the two sentences? This is not, then, to suggest that "I ought to do X" is an analytic statement which entails "I shall do X"; it is to say that they must be equivalent in meaning. Hare protests against the suggestion that according to his "treatment of moral judgments certain sentences would become analytic which in ordinary usage are not analytic,"¹ but this is not quite the way to put the problem. The problem is that "I ought to do X" means, both in its evaluative and descriptive senses, "Let me do X". It would not be accurate, then, to say, "Thus to say that moral judgments guide actions and to say that they entail imperatives, comes to much the same thing." It would be more accurate to say that moral judgments are imperatives; despite Hare's suggestions that it is not his intention to 'reduce' value judgments to imperatives.²

In my assessment of Hare's arguments in earlier parts of the book

¹LM, p. 173.

²LM, pp. 2, 175-9, & 180.

one of my main conclusions was that his manner of trying to distinguish between 'statements' and 'commands' was inadequate.¹ If this is so, in view of the alleged similarity of the logical behaviour of 'commands' and value judgments, it may be said that any of his attempts to distinguish between 'statements' and value judgments will also be inadequate. Now, in the consideration of his analysis of value judgments I have had to conclude that his assumption of the similarity of the 'logical behaviour' of value judgments and 'commands' has similarly run into difficulties. But the sum of these distinctions, as Braithwaite has suggested, amount to the "principal thesis" of Hare's argument. Although this suggests, then, that a different analysis is required of value judgments, commands, and statements (such as Braithwaite has given), I shall consider only the question of value judgments. Is it adequate to say, that is, that the primary 'function' of value judgments is to 'commend', in the sense in which this means to guide choices? This is the remaining major question of the three questions I had mentioned as emerging from the consideration of his theory.

One of the main problems with the thesis becomes apparent when one considers the making of a value judgment about people or actions of the past. It seems odd to suggest that the main 'function' of an ethical judgment 'commending' St. Francis is "to guide choices, our own or other people's, now or in the future." Hare is of course aware of the possibility of such a charge, for it is the kind of criticism that has been persistently made of non-objectivist theories. In Hare's case, however, the problem is even more acute than in some other non-cognitivist theories, in view of his claims that the logical behaviour of 'commands' and value

¹Cf., above, pp. 210, 216-7, 220.

judgments is the same. There are two difficulties with such a thesis; and Hare recognizes them in the final chapter, "An Analytical Model". The first problem is that the imperative mood is confined "only to the future tense, whereas a proper universal sentence", which he presumes a value judgment to be, "has to apply to all times, past, present, and future."¹ The second problem is that "the imperative mood occurs predominantly in the second person...." Thus Hare tries to construct "a new artificial terminology", the main purpose of which is "to enrich the imperative mood" to cope with these problems. We need not consider this attempt further. It is a dubious procedure, and the "artificial terminology" does not eliminate the oddness that led to its being invented.

Is there another possible analysis, we might ask, that does not require the invention of an artificial model? Braithwaite's review suggests that there is. "Supporters of an 'ethics without propositions'," he writes, "only weaken their case by attempting to construe moral maxims as concealed imperatives."² As compared with Hare's classification of all prescriptive language (that is imperatives as well as value judgments) into the single 'pattern of analysis' indicated by his 'phrastic-neustic' analysis, Braithwaite distinguishes between the two categories of "prescriptions" and "moral maxims", and in each of these categories he lists three types of sentences (as I have mentioned earlier, he distinguishes three types of "statements" as well). For him, "the philosophically fundamental use of moral maxims (is) that of moral subscription", which is exemplified by such a sentence as "I will play my part in seeing that no lies are ever told" or "I will ensure, so far as it rests with me, that no lies are ever told." In making this analysis Braithwaite of

¹LM, p. 187.

²Op.cit., p. 260.

course emphasizes the need for attending to the "contexts" in which sentences are used. This, we recall, was a central criticism in his review. Among the "less fundamental uses of moral maxims" he includes the two types, "moral injunctions" and "requests for moral co-operation", and these, he suggests, are analogous to imperatives. I need not consider Braithwaite's proposals further, for, in the next chapter there will be ample opportunity to consider alternatives to Hare's thesis. Considering what Nowell-Smith will have to say, it may be said, I believe, that while Hare has accepted in large part the Wittgensteinian doctrine that an individual word may have a variety of uses, he has not applied this distinction with sufficient thoroughness to his key words "good", "ought", and "right". It may indeed be further suggested that he has not sufficiently considered value words beyond these three, even though he has recognized that almost any word in our language may be used as a value word. He might well have considered, for example, the key aesthetic adjective "beautiful" in a variety of contexts in which it may be used. Even without providing a context it seems highly dubious to say that my purpose is to guide either my own choices or those of anyone else when I say that Greta Garbo is a beautiful woman. Other possibilities are suggested by the more complex analysis prescribed by Nowell-Smith.

What are the general conclusions to the three main questions I have mentioned earlier? Considering them in their order of treatment, I first questioned the logic of Hare's concern to 'universalize' general principles, and I argued that any major premiss of his practical syllogism must be trivial.¹ Secondly, on the question of whether value judgments may be held to entail imperatives,² we have seen that his argument is

¹Above, p. 279.

²Above, p. 287.

is circular and question-begging, and ultimately committed to saying that value judgments and imperatives are identical. Finally, as we have just seen, we may query the basic assumption that the primary function of value judgments is to guide choices or actions.

What may be said in general of Hare's place in the tradition of moral philosophy we have been considering? In view of the nature of my criticism it will be necessary to assess him as much in terms of intentions as of deeds. To begin with, he is a non-cognitivist, and while this negative term is inadequate to characterize his type of non-cognitivism it may serve to set him apart, with the others in this study, from a host of traditional moral philosophers. Next, he distinguishes between 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' uses of language, and this is a distinction which stems from Hume. Then, in a manner related to the first two distinctions, he is a non-naturalist in the non-metaphysical manner of Ayer and, especially, Stevenson. There is of course a new, twentieth century influence which has seemed compatible to most non-cognitivists. The contemporary history of this tradition (if not that of many other traditions as well) has been obviously affected more by Wittgenstein than by any other modern philosophers. The title of the book we have been considering is perhaps the best single example of that influence on Hare.

There are significant differences, however, at least in intention, between Hare and the emotivists. In any generalization of the influences leading to these differences the names of Kant and Aristotle would be predominant. It seems ironic, however, that most of the major difficulties in Hare's thesis have arisen through the combination of his efforts to dissociate himself from emotivism and to associate himself

with some aspects of the theories of Kant and Aristotle. In place of emotivism he proffered a form of 'conativism' modified by his non-cognitivism; although, regrettably, this aspect of his theory is expressed largely by implication. A further influence of Kant is apparent in the concern to 'universalize' general principles, to get as close as his non-cognitivism would permit to the categorical imperative.

His use of the Aristotelian practical syllogism as the implicit or explicit form of all genuine moral reasoning is the most unfortunate single aspect of his argument. The underlying problem which he undertook to resolve is a form of the problem initially posed by Hume when he rejected all 'is' to 'ought' arguments; and in its contemporary form the problem is usually stated as concerning the relationship between 'reasons' or 'supporting reasons' and value judgments. The alternatives which Hare considered were either to follow Hume (as Ayer, and as Stevenson with qualifications, had done), and to say that the fundamental relation is not logical, or to try to establish some kind of logical relation. (As we shall see in the next chapter, Nowell-Smith considers another alternative). Hare tried desperately to avoid the emotivists, and his use of the practical syllogism was his principal means. Whatever may have been his motives, he has not offered a convincing solution to the problem posed by Hume.

CHAPTER V

P. H. NOWELL-SMITH

Section 1

In 1955, in a review of Nowell-Smith's Ethics (which had been published in the previous year), C.L. Stevenson had this to say:

"...it is an excellent book. I cannot easily say whether it is more or less important than the recent works of ethics by Toulmin and Hare; but it unquestionably competes with them, and in my opinion quite strongly, for being rated the best contribution to ethics that has appeared since the war."¹

It would perhaps have been difficult for Stevenson to have said that it is the best even if he had thought so, since Nowell-Smith, as we shall see, is closer to him than are the other two. Later in his review Stevenson possibly overstates the similarities. In a context in which he refers to doctrines expressed in earlier writings (of Hobbes, Dewey, Ogden and Richards, Braithwaite, and his own Ethics and Language) he wrote the following passage:

"But I must not neglect to point out--though less to qualify my praise than to insure that it is properly directed--that the general principles of analysis embodied in the book, as well as the general ways of applying them to ethics, are all of them familiar. Nowell-Smith is original only with respect to a certain fresh emphasis that he gives to this or that special point."²

It is debatable whether there is nothing original within the analysis, but Stevenson at least makes it apparent that he would include Nowell-Smith as a brother-member in the same philosophic 'family'. The relationship is of course established even more clearly in the "Editorial

¹Mind, 1955, p. 405.

²Op. cit., p. 407.

Foreword" by A.J. Ayer which I quoted in the introductory chapter.¹

As Ayer's statement indicates, Ethics is a comprehensive book, and thus, for this thesis, it will be necessary to be selective. My main concern will be of course with Nowell-Smith's 'theory of values'; to assess, that is, what his alternative may be to the views we have already seen. In considering his theory, however, I shall assume as an underlying question the problem posed by Hume when he said that there is no logical relation between 'is-type' and 'ought-type' propositions. Ayer and Stevenson, in their respective ways, had accepted Hume's conclusion that there is, ultimately, an unbridgable logical gap between sentences used primarily for 'factual' purposes and those used primarily for 'evaluative' purposes; and thus they held that any relation between what have come to be called "reasons" for value judgments and the value judgments themselves must be a 'psychological' relationship. They might have simply called it a 'non-logical' relationship, but it does not beg any serious questions to treat the relationship as a mystery that is perhaps most easily handled in terms of the behaviouristic language of stimulus and response. Hare of course wished to dissociate himself from this view and tried to 'bridge the gap' by means of his practical syllogism; but, as we have seen, this attempt was unsuccessful and we had to return to Hume as represented by Stevenson. Nowell-Smith, like Hare, is unhappy about the 'gap', and, as I shall indicate, his central thesis is concerned with trying to resolve the problem by showing that the 'gap' is not really there at all. My main question is, then, 'Does Nowell-Smith convincingly resolve the problem posed by Hume?'.

In presenting their respective theories, the earlier philosophers

¹Above, p. 6.

we have considered have devoted some attention to negating possible alternatives to their views, and Nowell-Smith is no exception. I shall, then, in this first section, briefly consider his rejection of the two main opponents of non-cognitivism, that is, the 'theoretical' or 'cognitivist' theories of 'naturalism' and 'intuitionism'. Section 2 will be a summary of his examination of basic assumptions of traditional theories. His criticism of these assumptions leads into the introduction to his new 'logical apparatus', which I shall consider in Section 3. It is within this part of his argument that he postulates what may be taken as his central thesis---his attempt, that is, to eliminate "Hume's gap"¹ by means of his theories of "logical oddness" and "contextual implication". In Section 4 I shall consider his analysis of the purposes of 'practical discourse'. Section 5 will be concerned with his discussion of the logic of Gerundive-words; and within this section I shall consider his attempt to dissociate himself from what he terms the "Persuasive Theory". Section 6 will be a brief consideration of his treatment of the logic of the words "good", "ought", and "right".

He sets the theme for his book in the very first sentence: "A broad distinction may be drawn between theoretical and practical sciences." In establishing this theme he adopts the approach which now seems so obvious among those who have been influenced by Wittgenstein. He establishes the distinction, that is, in terms of purposes. This method is not of course the prerogative of Wittgensteinians for it dates back at least to Aristotle, and any teleologist is liable to use it. But not only may the method be Aristotelian, the distinction itself, as Nowell-Smith later points out, owes much to Aristotle. "The impossibility of a

¹Cf., Ethics, p. 40.

'scientific morality' and the reasons why it is impossible," he writes, "were more clearly understood by Aristotle than by any other philosopher."¹ In the first two paragraphs of the book Nowell-Smith proceeds to give his preliminary distinctions between the theoretical and the practical sciences.

"The purpose of the former," he writes, "is to enable us to understand the nature of things, whether the things be stars, chemical substances, earthquakes, revolutions, or human behaviour."

He then suggests that the motives for the development of this type of science may be found in the questions we ask.

"These (theoretical) sciences consist in answers to such questions as 'What is an acid?', 'What are the laws of planetary motion?', 'How do bees find their way about?', 'Why does wood float and iron sink?', 'What are the marriage laws of the Arapesh?'. The answers take the form of statements, descriptions, generalizations, explanations, and laws. I shall call such discourse 'theoretical', 'fact-stating' or 'descriptive' discourse...."

Aware of the kind of objection that has been made against the use of the word "descriptive" to refer to the language of the theoretical sciences,² he quickly goes on to say that "it must not be supposed that every sentence in such discourse is a theory or states a fact or describes something. Newton's laws belong to descriptive discourse, but they do not describe anything."

"Practical discourse, on the other hand", he continues, "consists of answers to practical questions, of which the most important are 'What shall I do?' and 'What ought I to do?'. If I put these questions to myself the answers are decisions, resolutions, expressions of intention, or moral principles. If I put them to someone else his answers will be an order, injunction, or piece of advice, a sentence in the form 'Do such and such'. The central activities for which moral language is used are choosing and advising others to choose."

There are immediately apparent several interesting similarities and dissimilarities between Nowell-Smith's statement about the purpose

¹Ethics, p. 19.

²Cf., e.g., Mary Warnock, op.cit., p. 139.

of practical discourse and the view of the earlier philosophers in this study. To begin with, it is apparent that, like the earlier philosophers, he distinguishes between what have been referred to as evaluative and descriptive uses of language. In citing the question "What shall I do?" he is of course using the same question as Hare, but in also mentioning "What ought I to do?" he immediately extends the range of possible answers. It is apparent, that is, that an 'imperative' or 'command' is not the primary answer or conclusion to 'practical' argument, as Hare considered it to be.

While his manner of distinguishing between theoretical and practical discourse is reminiscent of Stevenson's manner of distinguishing between beliefs and attitudes,¹ there is a difference of emphasis which could be the source of the main criticism made by Stevenson in his review-article.² Nowell-Smith's emphasis, that is, is on personal rather than interpersonal problems, and this emphasis would appear to be set by the posing of the two 'practical' questions as "the most important". The emphasis is increased later, as we shall see, when he asserts that "What shall I do?" is "the fundamental question of ethics".³ With this emphasis, as I shall argue in agreement with Stevenson, Nowell-Smith tends to ignore crucial problems of 'practical disagreement', except when he uses the fact of 'disagreement in obligations' to reject intuitionism. It is difficult to deny that value judgments are sometimes made not in reply to 'practical' questions which either I have asked or have been asked by another person, but rather for the purpose of expressing one's disagreement with another person's value judgment. Sometimes they are made simply to express agreement. It may then be philosophically misleading

¹Stevenson, EL, pp. 2-3.
³Ethics, pp. 100, 267.

²Op.cit., p. 408.

for Nowell-Smith to say that "practical discourse...consists of answers to practical questions...." This is not to say that there are not occasions when value judgments are made in response to questions, and possibly Stevenson's emphasis was equally faulty in stressing disagreement (and agreement, by implication) to the neglect of those problems which, as he allowed, do not involve agreement or disagreement, but "simply uncertainty and growing conviction."¹ In either case the same problems may arise concerning 'reasons' or 'justifications' for value judgments; but the difference in emphasis could well lead to a difference in emphasis in the answers a philosopher gives to the questions he poses to himself. On the one hand, a theory like Stevenson's which emphasizes ethical disagreement might appear to understress the importance of 'decisions', 'resolutions', 'expressions of intention', and 'moral principles', all of which Nowell-Smith stresses in terms of answers posed to oneself. Such a theory might also appear to over-stress 'persuasion', even though Stevenson was clearly aware of this "possible misconception"² of his theory. On the other hand, a theory which says that "practical discourse consists of answers to practical questions" might well neglect inter-personal disagreement, when one is neither concerned to provide answers, nor to help another person, nor to welcome value judgments conflicting with one's own. It is possible that both types of approach are partly right and partly wrong in their emphases, and this is a question which may be kept in mind for later consideration.

In addition to clearly distinguishing between theoretical and practical discourse in his first chapter, Nowell-Smith cites another distinction which is fundamental to his book. He does this in a passage

¹Cf., above, Ch. III, p. 121.

²EL, p. 83.

in which he differentiates between his approach and the approach of most traditional philosophers who had studied such concepts as 'responsibility', 'choosing as related to wanting', 'duty', and other such problems, without attending to the 'logic' underlying the questions.

"...the more obviously logical questions about words and sentences," he writes, "were, until very recently, largely neglected. This was because it was implicitly held that the logic of every type of discourse must be identical. Grammarians might be interested in verbal forms, statements, questions, commands, wishes and so on. But the province of philosophy was Truth and the sole vehicle of Truth was thought to be the 'proposition', expressed in an indicative sentence which ascribes a 'quality' to an 'object'. Other moods and sentence-forms and other uses to which sentences might be put, however important they might be in other ways, were irrelevant to the quest for Truth."¹

It is of interest that in the consideration of the non-cognitivist philosophers in this thesis it has been increasingly apparent that the significant modifications to what I have termed the Humean tradition have been made primarily as the result of the employment of several fundamental distinctions usually attributed to Wittgenstein. Although I have not seen Wittgenstein's name in Nowell-Smith's book, neither in the Index nor elsewhere, it may be said, nevertheless, that the book is in keeping with the Philosophical Investigations. There will be more evidence of this as we proceed. In any event, it is Nowell-Smith's intention, while employing these distinctions, to show that the adherence to the "logical dogma" (that the logic of every type of discourse must be identical with the logic of subject-predicate sentences which ascribe 'qualities' to 'objects') "has prejudiced and distorted the accounts which moral philosophers have given of what it is to make a moral decision or judgment."²

Like earlier non-cognitivists Nowell-Smith is concerned to reject intuitionism, and naturalism. It is unnecessary to consider his arguments

¹Ethics, pp. 21-2.

²Ibid., p. 22.

in detail since they are not essentially different from some of the arguments of the earlier non-cognitivists. Whereas Stevenson, for example, had indicated that these theories had emphasized 'beliefs' to the neglect of 'attitudes', Nowell-Smith maintains that they emphasize theoretical knowledge to the neglect of practical knowledge. An interesting innovation in Nowell-Smith's treatment, however, at least in the manner of expressing the argument, is that he does not treat intuitionists and naturalists separately. Summarizing, in effect, the history of the controversy, he first permits the intuitionist to reject naturalism or any other theory which would reduce ethical terms to non-ethical terms (thus to commit the 'naturalistic fallacy'); then he, Nowell-Smith, rejects intuitionism by indicating that it erroneously emphasizes theoretical knowledge.

"The strength of intuitionism," he says, "lies in its uncompromising insistence on the autonomy of morals. To put the point briefly and in my own way, practical discourse, of which moral discourse is a part, cannot be identified with or reduced to any other kind of discourse. Ethical sentences are not, as Moore so clearly shows, psychological or metaphysical or theological sentences. Almost all earlier theories had tended to reduce ethical concepts and sentences to those of some other subject, usually psychology; they tend to define words such as 'good' and 'ought' in terms, for example, of the satisfaction of desire or of pleasure and pain. Against all such attempts the intuitionists produce a crushing argument which is derived (surprisingly) from Hume."¹

Nowell-Smith then quotes Hume's familiar passage in which he challenges arguments which proceed from 'is' or 'is not' propositions to 'ought' or 'ought not' propositions. Nowell-Smith is not concerned to try to apply this argument to all earlier traditional theories, since he has suggested that the greatest of the earlier philosophers (such as Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Butler)² did not make the

¹Ethics, p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 13.

mistake of assuming that ethical problems were anything other than a matter of 'practical knowledge'. It might be argued, he suggests, that "Aristotle and certain Christian philosophers did not make the mistake, since their premises were really disguised value judgments or 'ought'-judgments from the start." While it may be said that a philosopher-cum-moralist could not be said to have committed the 'naturalistic fallacy', it is debatable whether he would evade Stevenson's charge of 'persuasive definition'. But, as Nowell-Smith says, "some philosophers, notably the hedonists, certainly did make this mistake, and of them Hume's criticism is an unanswerable refutation."¹

After the intuitionists have been allowed to rout the naturalists, Nowell-Smith asks if they have any more satisfactory proposal to "bridge the gap" between the factual data upon which a judgment is made, and the judgment itself. Intuitionists would insist, however, that "obligations are immediately and underivately known and require no deduction." Nowell-Smith therefore must argue that the intuitionist's "way of representing moral knowledge as theoretical knowledge leaves him with a gap to be bridged."² In the next chapter he will show that "the intuitionist cannot both maintain the immediate and underivative character of moral knowledge and also the analogy with empirical discourse which justified his use of such terms as 'see', 'recognize', 'true', 'mistaken', 'know', 'feel', and 'objective'."

His argument to indicate that there is a gap to be bridged by the intuitionist between 'is' and 'ought' is much the same as Ayer had used in his paper, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements".³ Nowell-Smith, like Ayer, points out that the intuitionist, in effect, treats moral

¹Ibid., p. 37.

³Op.cit., pp. 239-242.

²Ethics, p. 38.

judgments "as descriptions of features of the universe", even though he obscures this by alleging that the features are "non-natural". Like Ayer, Nowell-Smith suggests that, for the sake of argument, we may grant that the intuitionist has the experience of 'intuiting' the 'right-making characteristics' and the 'rightness' of a proposed action, and that he may also 'feel the emotion of obligation'.

"Does it follow," Nowell-Smith asks, "that I ought to do the action towards which I feel the emotion? If Hume's argument is valid at all, is it not equally valid against this deduction? It cannot be evaded by merely calling the characteristic and the emotion 'non-natural'; copious use of this epithet serves only to disguise Hume's gap, not to bridge it."¹

The point of the argument, as Ayer had so clearly expressed it, was that, for the intuitionist, as well as for the moral sense theorist, the value term he uses "simply comes to be descriptive of experiences" which he alleges to have. "In neither case," Ayer continues, "does anything whatsoever follow as regards conduct."² Descriptive statements simply do not serve the purpose demanded of evaluative or prescriptive statements.

The second of Nowell-Smith's arguments against intuitionism is an extension of an argument which had been used by Ayer in Language, Truth, and Logic.³ Nowell-Smith indicates the problem under the section-heading, "The Reconciliation of Conflicts". An interesting feature of the argument is that he contrasts the views of the intuitionist or objectivist with those of the subjectivist, both in terms of their theories about the nature of moral judgments as they are in fact used, as well as in terms of the possible consequences of such theories if they were adopted in practice. His justification for considering possible consequences of such theories is that objectivists have been prone to criticize sub-

¹Ethics, p. 40.

³Op.cit., p. 106; cf., above, Ch. II, p. 76.

²Ibid., p. 240.

jectivist analyses, as Stevenson had expressed it, for erecting theories on shifting sands. Such a theory, the objectivist often suggests, would lead to consequences which, as one objectivist, A. Castell, has expressed it, "are too high a price to pay for the theory in question". This writer, speaking of Ayer's theory in particular, went on to say that "if the theory is true, then no act can ever be criticized or justified in moral terms."¹ In the context of this argument, it should be noted, Nowell-Smith describes 'subjectivists' in a manner that could be roughly applied to most non-cognitivists. (Nowell-Smith appears to wish to remain somewhat aloof from 'subjectivism' in this sense, but, as I shall argue, it is very much doubtful that he can.) This is the sense in which Braithwaite identified himself with Hare's 'subjectivism',² and is akin to what Ayer had referred to as his 'radical subjectivism'. According to Nowell-Smith the subjectivist would describe a moral conflict in one of two possible ways; and what he says in this passage appears to be a summary of Ayer's statement in Language, Truth, and Logic. First, "I might try to convince you that you were mistaken about some non-moral fact", assuming that you would agree with my moral judgment when we had agreed upon the facts; or, secondly, "I might try to convince you that my moral judgment follows from or is a special case of some more general moral judgment which I know that you accept." Now both of these forms of argument, he says, "presuppose that there is some common moral ground between us, if only we can find it." But the subjectivist will allow, nevertheless, that "a point may be reached when there is no disagreement of a factual or logical kind; and yet a moral disagreement remains." At this point, as is said, the moral argument 'breaks down', and, as

¹A. Castell, An Elementary Ethics, p. 142.

²Braithwaite, op.cit., p. 250.

Nowell-Smith says, we "either agree to differ" or resort to "non-rational methods of persuasion."¹ Now such a theory, he emphasizes, is "about the nature of moral judgments", and "it does not imply the theory that most men approve of trampling on their neighbours."

Does the 'objectivist' theory, he asks, offer any more satisfactory explanation of moral conflicts?

"Theoretically the objectivist theory cannot help us to reconcile conflicts," he answers, "since it conceals a difficulty endemic in all theories involving 'intuition'. Intuitions of objective properties are either infallible or they are not. If they are fallible, then the mere existence of an objective property or value is no guarantee that anyone has apprehended it properly. However convinced you may be that you are right, it is still open to me to deny the genuineness of your intuition. If, on the other hand, intuitions are infallible, then disputes cannot be genuine. If I disagree with you, you must charge me either with insincerity or with moral blindness. And that this account of the matter is false is shown by the fact that we do often allow others to be sincere when their moral views differ from our own."²

He then proceeds to turn the tables on those objectivists who would argue that, in practice, their theory is superior to the 'shifting sands' theory of subjectivists.

"And in practice," he writes, "the objectivist is, as we should expect, in a far worse position for solving moral conflicts. He necessarily attributes his opponents denial of the truth to wilful perversity; and, holding as he does that in spite of his denials his opponent must really see the truth all the time, he realizes that what his opponent needs is not argument but castigation. For arguments cannot convince a man who already sees the light."³

He carries this approach even further when he indulges in an historical generalization.

"The objective theory, so far from minimizing the use of force to settle moral conflicts, can be, and constantly has been used to justify it. It is no accident that religious perse-

¹ Ethics, pp. 44-5; cf., Language, Truth, and Logic, pp. 110-112, and Intro. to 2nd. Edition, pp. 21-2. Note: See Ethics, p. 156, where Nowell-Smith uses these arguments, plus a third, for 'redirecting attitudes'.² I shall discuss this later.

² Ethics, p. 46.

³ Ibid., p. 47.

cutions are the monopoly of objective theorists."

The intuitionist or objectivist, according to Nowell-Smith and other non-cognitivists, assumes that moral judgments are analogous to theoretical or descriptive statements, the main qualification being that the qualities or properties 'intuited' are 'non-natural'. With this assumption, as Nowell-Smith has already indicated, the intuitionist cannot explain "the problem of reconciling moral conflicts", and if his theory is considered in terms of consequences it may lead to grave moral problems. Nowell-Smith now undertakes to examine the assumption itself, and his intention is to show that the analogy between moral discourse and empirical discourse "is mistaken in principle".¹ I shall outline only his main argument. This argument is of interest since it develops in more detail a conclusion which Ayer had expressed in his paper, when he said that the 'subjective-objective antithesis' is "out of place in moral philosophy."² It should be noted that Nowell-Smith does not intend to maintain that there is no analogy whatsoever. Since we do use "objective terminology in moral matters" ("we say 'this is good' rather than 'I approve of this' (and)...we call moral judgments true or false") it is apparent that the analogy may be of some use. His point is rather that "the analogy breaks down at a crucial point." Although the analogy will break down, he is concerned also that he should not be interpreted as expressing the kind of view held by earlier emotivists that moral judgments "are mere matters of taste or of what I happen to like."

"We find that moral judgments are in some ways like empirical statements," he writes, "and in other ways like expressions of taste; but it is not incumbent on us to say that moral judgments must be the one or the other. In fact they are obviously neither."³

¹Ethics, p. 49.
³Ethics, p. 49.

²Ayer, op.cit., p. 242.

What he intends by this statement will become clearer as we proceed.

His main argument to show that the analogy between moral discourse and empirical discourse breaks down, rests on what he refers to as the "objective-subjective contrast" which exists in our empirical discourse, but which cannot exist in moral discourse as the objectivist interprets it. This becomes obvious, he suggests, in cases of 'conflicting obligations'---a problem which objectivists tend not to consider with sufficient thoroughness. While relying on observation in 'empirical' situations, "we also know that our senses sometimes deceive us;"¹ and since we have standards which are generally agreed upon for testing empirical statements, "we make use of a double language in which 'is', is contrasted with 'looks' and 'feels'."

"Now it is an essential feature of the double language of 'looks' or 'feels' and 'really is'," he writes, "that, while the observer himself is allowed to be the last judge of how a thing looks or feels to him, he is not allowed to be the best judge of what it really is."²

I may still insist, for example, that one of two objects 'felt' heavier than the other, even though the scales on which I weigh them indicate that they both 'really' weigh the same. Nowell-Smith is careful not to claim too much with this argument. He is not suggesting that "general agreement" is "a test of truth", but simply that "it is a necessary condition of the use of objective language" in empirical discourse. Unless we use this objective-subjective contrast, he suggests, we would not be able to say, as we do, that a person's statement may be either 'correct' or 'mistaken'---and, as he will argue, the same thing must be said by the objectivist to apply to moral discourse as it does to empirical discourse. In applying the distinction to a situation in which there is

¹Ibid., p. 52.

²Ibid., p. 53.

moral disagreement, Nowell-Smith first mentions the subjectivist's criticism that if objectivism were a true account there could be no moral disagreement. He cites some of the objectivist's replies to this criticism, such as that "people often disagree where objective, empirical properties are concerned", and that "moral intuition might be a very imperfectly developed faculty and better developed in some men than in others." But this reply, he says, "misses the point of the objection." The point is that if there is what appears to be irreconcilable moral disagreement the objectivist cannot point to any agreed upon standard or method of testing conflicting judgments---which he should be able to do if moral discourse is analogous to empirical discourse. The intuitionist even allows, as Nowell-Smith mentions in his next argument, that "equally good men" may form conflicting judgments. Without such a test, however, the objectivist cannot say, as he wishes to do, that another person's statement is either 'correct' or 'mistaken'. If there is an analogy, the objectivist should be able to use the 'double language' of the 'objective-subjective contrast' in morals as he can in empirical matters, and he must be able to show "that there is a contrast...between 'is right' and 'seems right', which corresponds to the contrast between... 'is heavier' and 'feels heavier'."

"But this is exactly what the intuitionist cannot do; for in making direct awareness the test of real ethical properties he eliminates the whole point of the objective-subjective contrast. It is not that ethical properties are subjective or even that the objective-subjective contrast is wholly misplaced in ethics, but that the use of this contrast is quite incompatible with intuitionism."¹

Ayer, as I have mentioned, had arrived at the view that "the familiar subjective-objective antithesis is out of place in moral philosophy;"

¹Ethics, p. 56.

and he had done so from the same basic approach taken by Nowell-Smith--- that is, that both the subjectivist who said that there are no ethical properties and the objectivist who said that there are, are both using descriptive language. Nowell-Smith does not reject the antithesis entirely, however, as will be apparent when we consider his analysis of A-words and G-words.

Section 2

Having indicated the failure of both the naturalist and the intuitionist theories, he sums up the problem with which he confronts his reader.

"The study of ethics seems to end in a blind alley. The older philosophers set out confidently to 'erect schemes of virtue and of happiness', to discover that the Good Life is or what our duties are; but we end with an argument the burden of which is to show that all their efforts rested on a mistake. In place of the old, often laborious and sometimes exciting road we are offered the short cut of immediate insight. But our new guides not only fail to lead us where we want to go, they do not seem to understand where this is. We ask for help in the solution of practical problems and they offer us a description of a non-natural world. It is not surprising that this has led to a radical scepticism in the writings of otherwise very different philosophers. Both Logical Positivists and Existentialists tend to deny the possibility of knowledge or rational opinion in ethics and to doubt whether we can ever give good reasons for doing this rather than that."¹

This problem, as is apparent, was at its most pressing probably in the late 'thirties, following the publication, that is, of Language, Truth, and Logic; and Stevenson's Ethics and Language, in 1945, was the first major attempt to suggest a way out of the problem. What, asks Nowell-Smith, has been the cause of the failure in ethics? In reply, he repeats the suggestion we have seen earlier, that philosophers had ignored the 'logic' underlying their philosophic activities. To reinforce his point

¹Ethics, p. 61; for a similar statement see Toulmin, op.cit., p. 61ff.

he now undertakes to "try to show how the nature and purpose of practical discourse has been made unintelligible by the attempt to elucidate it by means of a logical apparatus unsuited to the purpose...." Then he will try "to substitute a new logical apparatus that may be more successful." We must now, then, undertake to outline and assess the 'positive' aspect of his thesis.

He proposes, first, to study "the logic of single words, especially adjectives", and then to go on to consider "the use of sentences and arguments in practical discourse." The 'new logical apparatus' he uses in undertaking this study will be seen to be an application of the doctrines usually associated with the later Wittgenstein.

In his consideration of the logic of single words, he isolates two assumptions which have been made by most traditional philosophers.

"(a) The first assumption is that adjectives are the names of properties (or qualities or characteristics), that their logical role is that of denoting, referring to or standing for something. It is a corollary of this that questions about the meaning of a word are to be answered by inspecting the idea, concept, or object which it denotes and comparing this with the objects denoted by other words....

(b) A second assumption, intimately connected with the first, is that we can ask what a certain word means instead of asking 'What does So-and-so mean by it?'¹

As Nowell-Smith points out, there may be nothing wrong with a philosopher's using these assumptions to study the subjects the analysis of which had led to propounding them; but "it is by no means obvious that the technical apparatus he uses will help to elucidate a realm of discourse quite different from that from which he chose his examples."² He has no difficulty in showing that the assumptions are indeed misleading if held to refer beyond either mathematics or the natural sciences, or beyond

¹Ethics, pp. 61-62.

²Ibid., p. 63.

'references' to "common objects". Moore, who had done so much to indicate that there is a difference between the uses of words such as "good" and "yellow", nevertheless, as I have suggested earlier,¹ had used misleading terminology. As Nowell-Smith expresses this, Moore's "proof that 'good' denoted something simple rests on the assumption that, if 'good' has any meaning at all, it must denote something."² This leads one to question the assumption that "all meaningful words and symbols denote". To hold this assumption would be to hold the theory of meaning which I have referred to in earlier chapters as 'meaning in terms only of referent'. As we have seen, Ayer was too closely bound to it, and was thus led into saying that ethical language was meaningless. Stevenson and Hare, however, had clearly seen that such a theory of meaning was limited in its application and could not apply to evaluative language. Nowell-Smith's point is not essentially different. A new theory of meaning is necessary for the proper understanding of practical discourse, he suggests, and the proposed theory is the Wittgensteinian doctrine that 'the meaning of a word is in its use'. Now to understand the use of a word one must study it in its context. As we have seen, this was the main basis of Braithwaite's criticism of Hare's thesis. In fairness to John Dewey, lest Wittgenstein be given too much credit, it should perhaps be noted that as early as 1920, he had advanced a view stressing the importance of considering "the logic of individualized situations",³ and he had said that "we advance to a belief in a plurality of changing, moving, individualized goods and ends, and to a belief that principles, criteria, laws are intellectual instruments for analysing individual or unique situations."⁴ I would not wish

¹Cf., above, Ch. II, p. 77ff. ²Ethics, p. 65.

³John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 137.

⁴Ibid., p. 132.

to make too much of this similarity, but it certainly may be construed as challenging the traditional assumption that "good" must always mean the same thing in all contexts. The relevance of mentioning Dewey is of course that his influence on the non-cognitivist tradition is directly felt at least through Stevenson. Dewey would certainly have agreed with Nowell-Smith's assertion that it is not safe to abstract a word from its context unless it is a technical word, or unless it refers to common objects. The reason for this is that "the same word can be used on different occasions, not merely as the name of slightly different objects, but to do different jobs, some of which are not naming jobs at all." "With which of these jobs," he asks, "are we to identify the meaning?"¹ The old 'logical apparatus' thus leads to the view that "practical discourse is either meaningless or descriptive of a special non-natural world...." Summing up the first part of his analysis of single words, especially adjectives, he prescribes the new method of approach:

"For the question 'What does the word...mean?' I shall therefore substitute the two questions 'For what job is the word...used?' and 'Under what conditions is it proper to use this word for that job?' The importance of separating these questions will emerge later; for the present I shall simply abandon the familiar model of words as labels attached to things and treat them as tools with which we do things. Talking is not always naming or reporting; it is sometimes doing."²

Using the new theory of meaning, Nowell-Smith now conducts an introductory examination of adjectives we use in our ordinary discourse. "The classification of adjectives", he says, "is necessarily a tentative and inexact business"; but, "for a start", he distinguishes between three main types. Before introducing his three-fold classification, however, he mentions, in order to reject, the intuitionist view that "goodness is a 'conse-

¹Ethics, p. 69.

²Ibid.; cf., Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I, Sections 11, 23, 43, 116, 117, etc.

quential Property', by which is meant that it is a property that something can have only if it has certain properties. As he had argued in rejecting intuitionism, "the link between goodness and the good-making properties is not a logical one", and "a special act of awareness is needed to apprehend it", although such an act cannot be as the intuitionist had interpreted it. Hare, we recall, had similarly argued that there was no relationship of entailment between the 'relevant descriptive characteristics' (of the minor premiss) to which we attach the 'supervenient' or 'consequential' term "good", and the particular value judgment (or conclusion). He wished to assert, nevertheless, that there was a kind of dual logical relationship by which the 'phrastic' and the 'neustic' of the conclusion could be logically drawn from his implicit or explicit practical syllogism. That is to say, the 'phrastic' of the conclusion could be drawn in a straightforward deductive manner through the 'phrastics' of the major and minor premisses, while the 'neustic' of the conclusion was in some way to be drawn from the 'neustic' of the major premiss (the 'list of virtues' or 'standard') in conjunction with the recognition that the minor premiss contained the 'relevant' descriptive characteristics, that is 'supervenient' or 'consequential' characteristics. As I have argued, Hare's use of this practical syllogism is at least a dubious procedure. Nowell-Smith, as we shall see later, does not make any such rigid formalistic attempt to analyse moral reasoning. Whether he avoids difficulties with his use of the new 'logical apparatus', however, remains to be seen.

Although he will not of course take the intuitionist approach, he nevertheless suggests that the relationship between an adjective such as "sublime", and "those features of a landscape in virtue of which we call it sublime" is "of the same type" as "the special act of awareness" by

which we "apprehend" the "goodness" of something. To illustrate this point he gives an example of a conversation in which a person describes a sightseeing experience, whereupon the second person says "What a sublime sight that must have been". The word "sublime", Nowell-Smith adds, could be replaced by such words as "magnificent", "stirring", "awe-inspiring", "wonderful", and so on.

"The connexion between their remarks," he says, "is obviously not logical entailment; yet we feel that B's comment was the natural and appropriate one to make. And this is because he is evincing the natural, appropriate emotion."¹

This example illustrates one of the three kinds of ways in which we use adjectives.

"...I shall refer to words of the same family as 'sublime' as Aptness-words (A-words), because they are words that indicate that an object has certain properties which are apt to arouse a certain emotion or range of emotions."

He goes on to say that he is using the word "indicate" with "deliberate vagueness". He does not wish to be interpreted, however, as saying either that the word "terrifying", for example, could "be defined in terms of 'causing fear'", or that A-words "just express the emotion of the speaker". "A-words", he continues, "have a logic of their own which is different both from that of Descriptive words (D-words) and from that of exclamations or reports of one's feelings."² In addition to A-words and D-words, there is a third, broad group of adjectives. Such words are "roughly analogous" to words like "praise-worthy", "note-worthy", "laudable", "damnable", and so on. As a tool for classifying these words he uses the expression "Gerundive-word"³ or "G-word". Among examples offered by Nowell-Smith to indicate the use in single sentences of these three types of words (that is, D-, A-, and G-, respectively) are the following: "A dress may

¹Ethics, p. 71

³Toulmin, op.cit., pp. 70-74.

²Ibid., p. 72.

be red, comfortable, and indecent. A ball may be a leg-break, tempting, and over-pitched. A man may be blue-eyed, amusing, and admirable".

There is of course an obvious similarity between these words and words which Stevenson would have (roughly) classified as 'descriptive', 'second-pattern', and 'first-pattern' words respectively. That is to say, Nowell-Smith's A-words are obviously what Stevenson would have termed "descriptively rich" as compared with the "descriptively vague" G-words; and while G-words would have been analysed primarily by Stevenson's first-pattern of analysis, the descriptively richer A-words would more appropriately be analysed by the second-pattern. Since Nowell-Smith postpones his main discussion of G-words until he considers language used for 'advice' rather than 'choosing', I shall not now attempt to assess this comparison. A further point remains, however, for, as is apparent from Nowell-Smith's examples, the distinction between A- and G-words appears to be no more clear-cut than the distinction between words which Stevenson would have assigned for either second-pattern or first-pattern analysis--- and this is a fact which Nowell-Smith later admits.¹ But whereas Stevenson would say that it is logically impossible to make such a distinction, Nowell-Smith would disagree; and he would maintain that the 'Gerundive-force' of some of our uses of words is logically distinguishable from the 'Aptness-force'. Whether he can maintain this distinction, however, is questionable, as I shall indicate later.

Following his introductory analysis of the logic of single words, Nowell-Smith turns to the logic of sentences and arguments. Just as there have been two misleading assumptions underlying the traditional logic of single words, there have also been two misleading assumptions,

¹Ethics, pp. 85, 151.

he suggests, concerned with the traditional logic of sentences and arguments. This second pair of assumptions, he says, is intimately connected with the first. In the same manner in which the first pair of assumptions has led to the neglect of considering words in their uses, so the second pair of assumptions similarly leads to considering sentences as abstracted from their contexts. For the sake of convenience, he indicates, he has spoken of A-words and G-words, but this could be misleading since "it would be nearer the truth to speak of A- and G-uses of words or to say that a word can be used with an A-force or a G-force." When one makes the following assumptions, he suggests, "this point is ignored":

- "(a) that it is always possible to draw a sharp distinction between questions about what a word means (or the property it denotes) and questions about the things to which the word applies (or the things that have that property); and
- (b) that statements can be sharply divided into analytic and synthetic."¹

It would be possible to make these assumptions without questioning them, so long as one assumed that the traditional logic which had developed from the analysis of 'theoretical' discourse; but as soon as one recognizes that words may be used for 'practical' as well as 'theoretical' purposes, and that a single word may serve a variety of both 'practical' as well as 'descriptive' purposes, the assumptions are seen to be questionable. As an example of the use of these assumptions, Nowell-Smith cites Moore's attack on the 'naturalistic fallacy'. If the naturalist insists on expressing his definition of "good" in an analytic statement, such as "'good' means 'pleasant'", then the non-naturalist points to an exception in our use of the word "good"; and if he defines "good" in a synthetic statement, such as "only things which are pleasant are good",

¹Ethics, p. 75.

then the non-naturalist points out that it makes sense to ask of a man who has called something pleasant, "but is it good?". Moore concludes that there is, so to speak, always something left over in attempts to define "good", and thus he says that "propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic."¹ Since our moral judgments cannot all be said to be trivial the non-naturalist who dismisses naturalism seeks to explain what a moral judgment is, but he does so in terms analogous to the 'property' language of the 'naturalistic' or 'scientific' theory he rejects. His answer, as Nowell-Smith indicates, is "that we must have a special faculty of insight into necessary, synthetic connexions".² The non-naturalist or intuitionist is thus inevitably led into the Kantian concern for the possibility of 'synthetic a priori propositions'. Now the contemporary non-cognitivist may make two points which would lead to setting this whole controversy to one side. First of all, both the naturalist and the non-naturalist had assumed, in their different ways, that "good" always meant the same thing. Once it is granted, however, that a word may be used in a variety of ways in a variety of contexts, then, as Nowell-Smith expresses it, while the non-naturalist attack may be valid "in refuting any simple, one-track theory of what 'good' means, it is powerless to refute any theory which allows that 'good' may mean different things on different occasions."³ In recognizing this, however, the non-naturalist must also recognize the weakness of his own assumption that "good" always has the same 'objective' meaning. Secondly, both the naturalist and the non-naturalist have made the same assumptions about the purpose served by the use of moral judgments; and once it is granted that moral words are not used in the same way as

¹Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 7.
²Ethics, p. 77.

³Ibid., p. 79.

'theoretical' or 'scientific' words, and that they may be used for 'practical' purposes, then the whole controversy over the 'naturalistic fallacy', as non-naturalists had interpreted it, is no longer seen to be relevant.

The suggestion that the 'analytic-synthetic' dichotomy breaks down is an extension, in considerably more detail, of a distinction which Stevenson had made in the brief section in which he considers Moore's treatment of 'naturalism'.¹ The questioning of the dichotomy emphasizes a significant difference between Nowell-Smith's (and Stevenson's) type of theory, on the one hand, and cognitivist theories, on the other; but it also emphasizes a difference between the later and earlier non-cognitivist theories, since to challenge the dichotomy is to challenge the use of the 'verification principle' as being appropriate as a test for moral judgments. As Stevenson had pointed out,² even theories which have "given attitudes a pre-eminent place" have often emphasized 'beliefs' to the neglect of 'attitudes', or, as Nowell-Smith would say, have emphasized 'theoretical discourse' to the neglect of 'practical discourse'. Hume had clearly expressed his adherence to the dichotomy as a test for 'rational' knowledge in his celebrated "commit it then to the flames" passage;³ and Ayer, as we have seen, had said of this passage, "what is this but a rhetorical version of our own thesis that a sentence which does not express either a formally true proposition or an empirical hypothesis is devoid of literal significance?"⁴ Now I would not wish to overstress this comparison between the two, for a case may be made for saying that Hume, unlike some of his contemporaries, had recognized that moral language served a practical purpose and was to be treated differently

¹EL, p. 273.

³Above, Ch. I, p. 26.

²Above, Ch. III, p. 140.

⁴Above, Ch. II, p. 66.

from the language of science. As we have seen Kemp Smith has convincingly argued that Hume had undertaken the writing of the Treatise with the presupposition that "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions"; and it is possibly significant that in the "commit it then to the flames passage", the volumes suggested as examples are those of "divinity, or school metaphysics". While it must be said that, for Hume, moral language was non-rational, possibly the most that can be made of this is that he did not presume that it should be 'rational'. His tests for meaningfulness might then be said to apply to any theories claiming to be based on 'reason', including cognitivist theories of morals. Ayer's approach, on the other hand, is not similarly debatable. There can be no question about the fact that he had approached his analysis of morals from his epistemology. Moral language, like metaphysical and religious language, had to be reckoned with before his theory could be said to be complete. Presupposing that the main purpose for language must be a 'cognitive' or 'theoretical' one, and assuming the 'analytic-synthetic' dichotomy within his verification principle, he was logically compelled to say that moral judgments are literally meaningless, or not genuine propositions. Now, despite the possible differences in their approach to the language of morals, it may be said that their arguments against 'cognitivist' theories were not without point. That is to say, the theories they challenged similarly presupposed the 'analytic-synthetic' dichotomy. Once it is clearly seen, however, that the main purposes served by moral judgments are not of a 'theoretical' or 'scientific' nature, that words may serve a variety of purposes, and that their 'meanings' or 'purposes' are not to be determined if they are taken out of contexts, then it becomes apparent that tests which may very well serve in theoretical discourse are no longer appropriate for other types of discourse. Thus it is, as

Stevenson and Nowell-Smith have indicated, that the 'analytic-synthetic' dichotomy, and the verification principle which is intimately related to that dichotomy, must be said to be inappropriate in the consideration of practical discourse.

While his rejection of the traditional assumptions might seem to lead to the suggestion that no 'reasons' might be given in support of 'doing things', Nowell-Smith, like Stevenson and Hare, would not agree.

"...it is certainly true that we do give good reasons for doing things, if only because the phrase 'giving good reasons' is the phrase used in English for something that we all know we do; and if any argument tends to show that this is impossible there must be something wrong with the argument."¹

It is necessary for the moment to differentiate between 'reasons' for 'doing things' and 'reasons' for value judgments, since, in considering A-words, Nowell-Smith is not considering value judgments. We must later relate the two questions; but the question before us now is "What are good reasons for doing things?"

Section 3

Before Nowell-Smith deals directly with this question, however, he must say something further about 'the logic of sentences and arguments', as well as about 'the purposes of practical discourse'. It is at this point that we are introduced to the central thesis of the book. In considering the 'logic of sentences and arguments' he again emphasizes that a major "logical mistake" of the earlier theories was that they supposed "that the meaning of 'good' can be examined in isolation from its context"; thus he introduces his doctrine of "contextual implication".² And when he later examines the phrase "good reasons" he will say that the test of a 'good reason' is that "it would be logically odd either to ask

¹Ethics, p. 78.

²Ibid., p. 79.

for further reasons for doing something or for a further explanation of why someone did it".¹ The key phrase is of course "logically odd", and since he makes considerable use of it, as well as of the phrase "contextual implication", I shall try to summarize and assess the sections in which he stipulates the 'rules' for their use and illustrates the application of the rules. As I shall argue, most of the major difficulties with Nowell-Smith's thesis have to do with his use of the concept of "logical oddness".

He introduces the first of these sections² with the following example of a conversation:

- "A. What are you doing?
- B. I am having a nice smoke.
- C. Are you enjoying it?"

Commenting on the example he says that "the last question is puzzling. Once B has said that he is having a nice smoke there seems to be no further room for the question 'Are you enjoying it?'." He does not suggest that there may not be occasions when the question has a purpose. He says, for example, that A might have "some embarrassing communication to make to B and he simply wants to keep the conversation going...." But, as Nowell-Smith continues, "in the absence of such special reasons, the question seems otiose because, in this context, 'nice' expresses the enjoyment of the speaker and he has already said that it is nice."³ This is not to say that "nice" always expresses the enjoyment of the speaker, for, as he suggests, there are occasions when we may use the word to predict that the questioner or hearer may enjoy something (for example, as in the statement "Strawberries are nice".) One cannot use "nice" in the same predictive way, he suggests, about oysters, even though the speaker may

¹Ibid., p. 105.

²Ibid., p. 79-84.

³Ethics, p. 80. (My underlining. I shall later refer to his use of this word.)

use the word to express his own enjoyment. He intends to defend the predictive use of A-sentences in more detail later. "For the moment", he writes, "I wish only to make the point that 'they are nice' has different implications in different contexts."

Now there is a shift in Nowell-Smith's use of the highly ambiguous word "implications" between this sentence and the sentences immediately following. This is important to notice, since if he were held to his original manner of using the word it is doubtful if he could have attached so much importance to his use of the terms "logical oddness" and "contextual implications". In the context of the preceding passage he has been speaking of various uses of the word "nice", and I would suggest that instead of his saying that he wishes "only to make the point that 'they are nice' has different implications in different contexts", he should be held simply to saying that he wishes "only to make the point that 'they are nice' serves different purposes in different contexts." By his use of the word "implications", however, he paves the way for using it not to suggest 'meanings' in the sense of 'purposes' or 'uses', but rather to suggest 'logical implications'. The reader is now prepared to consider the phrase "they are nice" in terms of what it 'logically implies' or 'what follows analytically' from it. The shift begins in the very next passage:

"In the first context 'nice' was used to express the enjoyment of the speaker; in the second to predict the enjoyment of the hearer. This point is obscured if we suppose that 'nice' must mean the same thing in all contexts and that what follows analytically from the statement 'It is nice' is the same in all contexts."¹

But he will go on to allow that we cannot use the rules of logical implication (as Hare thought we could) for practical discourse. Nevertheless,

¹ Ethics, p. 80 (my underlining).

by using the word "implications" as he has done, he has now led us to thinking in terms of "what follows analytically" from a value judgment. If we were to adhere, however, to the use of either the word "purpose" or the word "meaning", the last sentence of the preceding quotation would then read:

"This point is obscured if we suppose that 'nice' is used for the same purpose in all contexts and that the statement 'It is nice' serves the same purpose, or has the same meaning in all contexts."

The statement would of course be trivial; but to suggest anything more at this point would appear to be begging the question for a kind of logical implication. This, in fact, becomes apparent when Nowell-Smith proceeds to write the next passage:

"For the concept of logical implication or analytic connexion between statements I propose to substitute the concept of 'contextual implication', and for the concept of self-contradiction that of 'logical oddness'...."

Now even though he will proceed to say that 'contextual implication' and 'logical oddness' are not to be construed in any rigidly formalistic way, nevertheless, because of his different uses of the word "implications" in the same context, it would appear that he has been led into pre-supposing that there is a rough analogy between formal logic and his 'practical logic'. This, however, is to beg a very large question. It would have been less question-begging if he had adhered to the approach he had prescribed earlier. That is to say, instead of considering the statement "it is nice" in terms analogous to the phrase "what follows analytically from it", he might simply have considered it in terms of his two questions, "For what job is the word 'nice' used?", and "Under what conditions is it proper to use the word for that job?" (although the word "proper" would have to be watched carefully in any reply to the second question). It is possible that the answers to these questions

might be obscured by asking what is the "contextual implication" of the word as if it were not also a legitimate question to ask "For what job is the word 'nice' probably being used?". This question may be kept in mind throughout the remainder of my summary of his argument in which he stipulates how he intends to use these key phrases.

He illustrates his use of the phrase "contextual implication" in the following passage:

"I shall say that a statement p contextually implies a statement q if anyone who knew the normal conventions of the language would be entitled to infer q from p in the context in which they occur. Logical implications are a sub-class of contextual implications, since if p logically implies q, we are entitled to infer q from p in any context whatever. Contextual implication can be most easily illustrated in a case where there is clearly no logical implication.

If Jones says 'It is raining', Smith is entitled to infer that Jones believes that it is raining, although 'Jones believes that it is raining' clearly does not follow logically from 'It is raining'. Conversely there is clearly no contradiction between 'It is raining' and 'Jones believes that it isn't raining'; yet it would be logically odd for Jones to say 'It is raining, but I don't believe it is'.¹

In this passage, as in others, Nowell-Smith liberally uses the phrase "entitled to infer", and on each occasion of its use we are entitled to ask "By what right are we entitled to infer?" He now proceeds to stipulate three rules for 'contextual implication'. These rules are of course philosopher's rules, derived, in this instance, from the analysis of our linguistic behaviour---as the first sentence in the preceding quotation indicates. While they are designated as rules of 'contextual implication', and while the emphasis is often on what the speaker implies, it is apparent from the argument that we may also use them from the hearer's point of view as rules of 'contextual inference'. This point is worth mentioning, I believe, since if we are to consider the use of words in their

¹Ethics, pp. 80-1.

contexts it is worth remembering that the speaker on most occasions will probably have a clearer understanding of his purpose than will the hearer. And if it is the intention of the speaker actually to 'contextually imply' something known to him but not to the hearer, then what the hearer 'contextually infers' will only be (from his point of view) more or less probable (this is all of course on the supposition that there is such a relationship as 'contextual implication', and that such 'implication' is not as formally rigid as logical implication). Now he prefaces his introduction of the rules with the candid admission that they are not "rigid". "Unlike the rules of logical implication they can all be broken without the speaker being involved in self-contradiction."¹ If this is the case, however, why carry on with the suggestion that 'contextual implication' is analogous, even if only roughly so, to 'logical implication'? Either we have logical implication (including 'material implication') or we have something distinctly different; and if an analogy is to be found for a kind of 'implication', or 'inference' which is not formally rigid, it would appear to be at hand in empirical procedures. If all of the rules of 'contextual implication' are lax, why say that we are "entitled to infer" as if, on the occasions when we felt so entitled, our 'inference' were based on the new rules? Do we not need other rules, that is, to help us to detect when a person is breaking or keeping the new rules? And if so, would not the other rules be more fundamental? I will suggest that when the question is a matter primarily of a 'descriptive' or 'factual' nature, Nowell-Smith, in order to apply the distinction of 'logical oddness', would have to rely implicitly not so much on more fundamental rules, but rather on more fundamental procedures---that is, the empirical

¹Ethics, p. 81.

procedures we learn to use in our normal experience. If canons or rules of induction were felt to be necessary then these canons or rules would be more basic than Nowell-Smith's rules. In any event, if we are to make sense of the application of the phrase "logically odd" to any particular 'explanation' or 'reason' appropriate to a factual or descriptive question, we must rely on empirical procedures. This being so, I would suggest that in such questions the introduction of the notion of 'logical oddness' is otiose. Is there any need, we might ask, to analyse the preceding example about Jones and Smith as if Smith's inference about what Jones believes is based on any rules beyond the common-sense empirical procedures we learn in our normal experience? It is not, in any event, a consideration of the single context of the use of the statement by Jones that 'entitles' Smith to make an inference about what Jones believes. It is rather the past experience of a sufficient number of 'contexts' of knowing Jones and people like Jones that would allow Smith to say, in effect, "On this occasion of Jones's saying 'It is raining', in all probability Jones believes that it is raining." In this argument, I would emphasize, I have stressed that to make sense of Nowell-Smith's distinction of "logical oddness" in what might be termed 'factual' or 'descriptive' questions (such as Smith's trying to 'infer' if Jones believes what he says) we must rely on empirical procedures which go beyond the context of the sentence as used. This is not to say, that is, that one must rely on empirical procedures on every occasion of trying to make sense of the distinction, for, as I shall argue, in questions of values the only way we could use Nowell-Smith's distinction of "logical oddness" would be to make a value judgment in using it.

Let us now consider the three rules of 'contextual implication':

"Rule I. When a speaker uses a sentence to make a statement, it

is contextually implied that he believes it to be true. And, similarly, when he uses it to perform any of the other jobs for which sentences are used, it is contextually implied that he is using it for one of the jobs that it normally does."

This rule is often broken, he says, in "lying, play-acting, story-telling, and irony...." "But these are secondary uses," he continues, "that is to say uses to which an expression could not (logically) be put unless it had some primary use." Bearing in mind my criticism of the notion of 'contextual implication' we may replace this rule to read:

"When a speaker uses a sentence to make a statement, a consideration of the context of the sentence, as well as of the broader context of our past experience with speakers of this type in this type of situation, entitles us to make the inference that probably he believes his statement to be true...", and so on.

The same kind of rephrasing is possible for the remaining rules.

"Rule 2. A speaker contextually implies that he has what he believes to be good reasons for his statement."

This rule, also, may be broken, he says, "and we have special devices for indicating when we are breaking it...such as (the phrases) 'speaking off-hand...', 'I don't really know but...', and 'I should be inclined to say that...'. "

"But unless one of these guardian phrases is used," he continues, "we are entitled to believe that the speaker believes himself to have good reasons for his statement and we soon learn to mistrust people who habitually infringe this rule."

Consideration of this passage helps to reinforce my point that the context of any particular statement in itself does not guide us in judging whether a person believes he has good reasons. It is our experience of knowing "people who habitually infringe this rule" or mode of behaviour---our experience, that is, of many 'contexts', not simply one.

"Rule 3. What a speaker says may be assumed to be relevant to the interests of the audience."

This rule, he adds, "is the most important of the three rules", but,

"unfortunately it is also the most frequently broken. Bores are more common than liars or careless talkers." The reason for his saying that this is the most important rule becomes apparent when he says that "it is particularly obvious in the case of answers to questions, since it is assumed that an answer is an answer." In the first two paragraphs of the book, we recall, he had said that theoretical sciences "consist in answers" to 'theoretical' or 'descriptive' type questions, while practical discourse "consists of answers to practical questions" such as "What shall I do?" and "What ought I to do?" He now grants that "not all statements are answers to questions; information may be volunteered", but even "the publication of a text-book on trigonometry implies that the author believes that there are people who want to learn about trigonometry, and to give advice implies that the advice is relevant to the hearer's problem." The 'rule' turns out, I suggest, not to be a rule so much as it is a statement about all 'purposeful' discourse. In other words, any statement which is intended, for example, either as advice or as a reason to support the advice, is thus primarily a practical and not a theoretical statement. Nowell-Smith in effect grants this point in the following crucial passage:

"This rule is of the greatest importance for ethics. For the major problem of theoretical ethics was that of bridging the gap between decisions, ought-sentences, injunctions, and sentences used to give advice on the one hand, and statements of fact that constitute the reasons for these on the other. It was in order to bridge these gaps that insight into necessary synthetic connexions had to be invoked. The third rule of contextual implication may help us to show that there is no gap to be bridged because the reason-giving sentence must turn out to be practical from the start and not a statement of fact from which a practical sentence can somehow be deduced."¹

The rule is indeed of "the greatest importance for ethics", for,

¹Ethics, pp. 82-82.

if it can be supported, Nowell-Smith would have eliminated the problem posed by Hume which has exercised so many philosophers from Kant to the present. More must be involved, however, than simply the recognition that any sentence which is used to 'support' a value judgment is thereby 'practical' and thus of the same 'logical type' as the value judgment. It is conceivable, for example, that Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson, in their respective ways, could have allowed that 'factual' statements which are used to 'lead to' value judgments may be termed 'practical', but they would have insisted nevertheless that there is no relationship of logical implication between them. And more must be involved than simply recognizing that a particular 'factual' statement expresses an instance of the kind of thing of which a person normally expresses approval or disapproval, since this kind of argument has been allowed by emotivists among others. As we have already seen, Nowell-Smith cannot allow that the relation between a 'descriptive' sentence and a 'practical' judgment or decision is one of strict logical entailment, and later, as we shall see, he rejects the kind of deductive procedure proposed by Hare.¹ He also rejects 'synthetic' relations between 'reason' and judgment, as is indicated by the preceding quotation as well as by statements elsewhere in the book. He has of course rejected the 'analytic-synthetic' dichotomy as being applicable to ethics, but the force of this is rather to reject those theories which have been based on the error of supposing that value judgments were analogous, in their 'logical behaviour', to 'theoretical' or 'descriptive' sentences. But while the rejection of the dichotomy offers no obstacle to philosophers who consider that there is no logical relation between 'reason' and 'value judgment' (in fact it

¹Ethics, p. 88.

would serve to deepen the mystery which they recognize) it does present an obstacle to a philosopher who would wish to establish a logical relation. Nowell-Smith must, then, (like Hare) present a 'logical apparatus' which would allow him to argue 'logically' from a sentence which is both 'descriptive' and 'practical' to another sentence which is both 'practical' and 'descriptive'. That 'apparatus', as we have seen, is the 'apparatus' of "logical oddness" and "contextual implication". But as I have already suggested, the 'apparatus' is by no means free from trouble, and, in what follows, I shall argue that it serves no practical purpose, and, indeed, leads to serious paradoxes. I shall thus contend that the problem initially posed by Hume yet remains.

In concluding his remarks about Rule 3, Nowell-Smith makes a curious, but I think revealing observation.

"This rule is, therefore, more than a rule of good manners; or rather it shows how, in matters of ordinary language, rules of good manners shade into logical rules. Unless we assume that it is being observed we cannot understand the connexions between decisions, advice, and appraisals and the reasons given in support of them."

This remark is of interest for three reasons. First, all of the rules are at least rules of good manners; but, in the way in which they are expressed, it is doubtful if they are anything more. If I doubt, for example, that a man believes what he says or has reasons for what he says, or if I doubt that his remarks are truly relevant to my purposes, I would not use Nowell-Smith's rules to test my doubts---although to act in terms of his rules, while testing my doubts, would be to display good manners. Rule 3 would be more than a rule of good manners, however, if it is differently expressed. As I have suggested, it turns out not to be a rule so much as it is a statement of fact that much of our language is practical, even the 'scientific' language of text-books. The 'good

manners' remark is of interest, as I have said, for two other reasons. Nowell-Smith says that "unless we assume that it (Rule 3) is being observed we cannot understand the connexion between decisions, advice, and appraisals and the reasons given in support of them." I have suggested that it is one thing to recognize that 'reasons' may be classified as 'practical' along with decisions, advice, and appraisals, but it is another thing to say that there is some kind of logical relation between them. This, then, is an assumption which remains unsupported. The third point, by way of comparison, is that Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson would readily allow that "we cannot understand the connexions between decisions, advice, and so on, and the reasons given in support of them." To generalize their point of view, they would accept this as simply another of the mysteries with which we have to live.

Following his stipulation of the rules for 'contextual implication' Nowell-Smith proceeds to indicate how he intends to use the phrase "logical oddness", and then to prescribe the task of the moral philosopher:

"I shall say that a question is 'logically odd' if there appears to be no further room for it in its context because it has already been answered. This is not to say that the question is necessarily senseless, but that we should be puzzled to know what it meant and should have to give it some unusual interpretation. In the example of the man having a nice smoke it was logically odd to ask if he was enjoying it, because in that particular context his previous remark implied that he was.

The task of the moral philosopher is to map the mutual relationships of moral words, sentences, and arguments; and this is a task, not of showing how one statement entails or contradicts another, but of showing that in a certain context it would be logically odd to assert one thing and deny another or to ask a particular question."¹

To illustrate further what he means by "logically odd" questions, he cites three examples of conversations. In these examples the 'good reasons' are, respectively, in terms of A-sentences, D-sentences, and G-sentences. The

¹Ethics, p. 83.

G-sentence example is as follows:

"A. I'll pay the butcher.

B. Why?

A. Because I owe him money.

B. Why? (Meaning, not 'How did the debt arise?', but 'Why is the existence of a debt a reason for paying them?')."

The second "why?", Nowell-Smith says, is "logically odd". In view of what I have said, however, about his shift in the use of the ambiguous word "implications", from its first use as roughly synonymous with "meanings" in the sense of 'uses' or 'purposes', to its use as suggestive of 'logical implications',¹ I believe that the use of the phrase "logically odd" is logically misleading. A less misleading, indeed appropriate word for such questions would be the word which Nowell-Smith used when introducing the distinction---that is, the word "otiose", in the sense in which this means "not required, serving no practical purposes, and functionless". Even in this weaker sense, however, as I shall indicate shortly, it is debatable whether or not the second 'why?' is otiose.

Nowell-Smith's concept of "logical oddness", as I have indicated, turns out to be in some manner the criterion for determining whether a 'reason' is a 'good reason'. In the three types of examples, including the preceding G-sentence example, he allows that A's reply to the first question in no way entails "the decision to do what he decides to do."

"Nevertheless", he continues, "in each case B's second question is logically odd. What can he be after? What better reason or further reason could he expect to be given after the one that has already been given?"²

Now it should not go unnoticed that this is expressed in the form of a challenge, which, in the case of the example I have quoted, challenges one either to agree or disagree with the value judgment that one ought to pay his debts. It is not inconceivable, however, as Stevenson would

¹Above, p. 329.

²Ethics, p. 84.

readily allow, that B's second "why?" is indicative of a genuine evaluative disagreement (or 'disagreement in attitude'). If we agree that the second "why?" is otiose it is only because we agree with Nowell-Smith's value judgment that 'one ought to pay his debts'. Would it be so easy to accept Nowell-Smith's distinctions about 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implications', however, if we were to choose an example, which is not at all difficult to do, in which there is often widespread disagreement within a community? Examples might be readily drawn from apparent disagreements over preferences for political parties, capital punishment, national health service, and many others. Consider, for example, the following conversation:

- "A. I'm going to join the Aldermaston march.
- B. Why?
- A. Because I disapprove of 'the bomb'.
- B. Why? (Meaning 'why is disapproval of the bomb a good reason for going to Aldermaston?').

In justice to Nowell-Smith we should of course carry this conversation on much farther; but it is logically possible that there would be a point at which a final "why?" would be asked which neither could be answered nor which could be said to be logically odd (coming, as it does, from a person who believes bombs ought not to be banned). At this point we would have the kind of problem which concerned Stevenson; and it is a moral problem. Nowell-Smith, it would appear, at least in this important part of his book in which he is introducing his main distinctions, has too readily closed off the possibility of such a problem. The main force of this objection is of course that if he were to recognize Stevenson's problem he would have to consider the possibility that his distinctions of "logical oddness" is, in questions of value as in questions of 'fact', otiose or 'logically odd'. Consideration of the case of genuine disagreement in attitude would compel him to provide further distinctions

or criteria for determining when a question is 'logically odd'; and this is the kind of question which he can hardly leave to individual value judgments.¹ To this point, however, he has not provided any such criteria, either for the consideration of questions which are primarily 'descriptive' or for questions which are primarily 'practical'. As I have argued earlier, it would be necessary to rely on empirical procedures beyond Nowell-Smith's special rules in order to make sense of the use of "logically odd" in questions of 'fact'. I will now suggest that the use of the phrase "logically odd" in questions of value is possible only if we make a value judgment in applying the phrase. To say that in my example of the Aldermaston marcher the second 'why?' is 'logically odd' is simply to make a value judgment disagreeing with B about the merits of banning the bomb; and it seems otiose or 'logically odd' to refer to an opposing value judgment as 'logically odd'. It would appear that, to this point, Stevenson has good grounds for criticizing Nowell-Smith for not being sufficiently concerned with inter-personal problems. This problem will emerge again later, and, as I shall argue, the use of the concept of "logical oddness" leads to further difficulties.

Nowell-Smith now proceeds to point out that in the three sets of examples, the 'reason', in each case, is "a different sort of reason and we shall see that it is tied to the decision in a different way. The answers, we recall, were samples of A-, D-, and G-sentences. He now explains that the remainder of the book "will be largely devoted to a discussion of the ways in which these different sorts of reasons fit into each other." By way of illustrating the application of his rules he begins by providing an analysis of "the role of A-sentences." (Although

¹Cf., *Ethics*, p. 105, concerning the distinction between "morally good reason" and "logically good reason".

I shall use his language in summarizing the section I shall assume that on each occasion of his use of the phrase "logically odd", the word "otiose" is more appropriate).

In choosing A-sentences to illustrate his rules he says that his intention is to "keep away from specifically moral uses of words." He intends to indicate later that this digression is "not so irrelevant as it may seem" since the "operation of 'good', 'right', 'ought', and G-words is in many respects similar to that of A-words." Each A-word, he says (such as "terrifying, hair-raising, disappointing, disgusting, beneficial, ridiculous," and so on) "is connected with a specific human 'reaction'." He grants that "there may be a gerundive element in the use of many of these words, especially if they are prefixed by 'truly' or 'really';" but for the moment he is concerned with them as 'reaction' words. The word "reaction", he stipulates, "must be widely construed", and it must be considered to include "attitudes that people might take up, emotions they might feel, things that happen to them and things that they do."

"I shall call the reaction 'appropriate'", he writes, "if it is the reaction that is logically tied to the A-word in question, for example, 'being frightened' to 'terrifying', without any suggestion that the reaction ought to be exhibited in a particular case.

To understand the logic of an A-sentence we must ask, not 'What does it (always) mean?', but 'What does its use in this instance contextually imply?', 'What would it be logically odd to question?'.¹

When he speaks, in the preceding passage, of a reaction's being "logically tied to the A-word", it is apparent that he uses the word "logically" in the same sense as he uses it in the phrase "logically odd". There is of course nothing logically contradictory, in the strict sense

¹Ethics, p. 85.

of logical implication, as Nowell-Smith allows, for me to be frightened and yet to say "my experience is not terrifying." But as he uses the word here, it is suggested that it would be "logically odd" for me, if I am frightened, to say "my experience is not terrifying." Thus to say that a 'reaction' is 'appropriate' is to say, at least, that it is not 'logically odd'. It is not clear whether we judge that a reaction is 'appropriate' after we have assessed that further questions would be 'logically odd', or whether 'logical oddness' is in some sense determined because of our judgment that a 'reaction' has been 'appropriate'. But this problem is of lesser significance than others we shall face so I shall not pursue it.

He now suggests that there are four main 'elements' which "seem to be contextually implied in typical uses." Since they are "contextually implied", and may thus be assessed by the criterion of 'logical oddity', we may assume that each of these 'elements' may be considered as a 'reason' for uttering an A-sentence. He does not say that all of them are present on all occasions, nor are they to be considered as equally prominent. He says that "the relative prominence of the different elements will be different on different occasions." These elements are as follows:

- "(a) The subjective element. In default of other evidence the use of an A-sentence usually implies that the speaker has the appropriate reaction."¹

Unless the speaker qualified his statement (to say, for example, "It was a terrifying ordeal, but I wasn't frightened.") Nowell-Smith says that "we should always be entitled to infer that the speaker has the appropriate reaction." The reaction would be 'appropriate', that is, in the sense that it would be 'logically odd' or otiose to ask, 'You say it was

¹For this and remaining 'elements', see Ethics, pp. 85-87.

a terrifying ordeal; but were you frightened?'

- "(b) The predictive element. An A-sentence is sometimes used to imply that someone would have the appropriate reaction to something if suitable circumstances arose.
- (c) The generalizing element. Sensible people do not make predictions (or retrodictions) except on the basis of evidence, so that a man who uses an A-sentence to make a prediction contextually implies (by Rule 2) that he has what he believes to be good reasons for making the predictions.
- (d) The causal element. Things are not just terrifying or amusing or comfortable; animals are terrifying if they are strong, fierce, and malevolent; plays amusing if they contain a high proportion of remarks and situations of a certain sort.... To be told that something has an A-characteristic is not to be told just what causal properties it has that give it that characteristic; but it is contextually implied that it has such properties. And if the A-word is sufficiently narrow in scope we can often infer what properties it has although the speaker does not mention them."

In considering in what way the 'elements' may be said to be "present in" the use of an A-sentence, Nowell-Smith offers an argument which may be used against Hare's use of the concept of 'supervenient' or 'consequential' characteristics, especially within the 'practical syllogism'. None of the 'elements', Nowell-Smith writes, may be said to exhaust "the meaning of an A-sentence"; nor do they "logically imply" each other (in the strict sense of the word "logically"). Thus, he suggests, "we are tempted to say that A-words denote special causal properties of bulls, jokes, mountains, cars, and so on in virtue of which they cause people to have the appropriate reaction." Now while it is not easy to determine what exactly Hare considered to be the relationship between his 'consequential' characteristics and the things he judged, his theory is close in form at least to what Nowell-Smith is here describing as "special causal properties". Whether the relationship considered by Hare was causal or not, Nowell-Smith generalizes his argument in a way that would encompass Hare's theory; and later in the same argument he specifically says that

the explanation in terms of "consequential properties"¹ is not helpful. The logic of the use of A-sentences, he says, "requires no special properties which they denote; indeed such properties only make their use unintelligible."² To support this point he now considers the relationship between the 'generalizing element' and the 'predictive element' of an A-sentence, and the analytic sentences may be seen to be analogous, respectively, to the major premiss and the conclusion of Hare's syllogism. Indeed Nowell-Smith's statement of the major premiss comes close to stating one of the two main 'criteria for assent to a general principle' postulated by Hare. Hare had said, that is, that the principle should be "well-established (i.e. that everyone would agree with it)"; and, in fact, he speaks of this as one of the two "elements" in a judgment, the other element resembling the "subjective" element in Nowell-Smith's analysis.³ Nowell-Smith's example is as follows:

- "(1) Most people of type X, have been frightened by Y's.
- (3) You, being of type X, will be frightened by Y's."

The relation between these 'elements', he argues, "is clearly inductive", and "subject to those doubts (real or imaginary) which infect all inductive arguments." Although he says that it is not his purpose to "discuss the logical gap, if any, between the premiss and the conclusion," he wishes only "to show that it cannot be bridged by the introduction of an A-sentence". He uses the following A-sentence:

- "(2) Y's are terrifying to people of type X."

Now this minor premiss, presupposing in this instance either causal or consequential characteristics, is analogous to Hare's minor premiss. By promoting some of the 'descriptive characteristics' to 'consequential', Hare had hoped that the conclusion might in some way be validly drawn.

¹Ethics, p. 90.
³Hare, LM, p. 196.

²Ethics, p. 87.

Nowell-Smith argues, however, that the minor premiss "either does too much or too little."

"(a) If it is held to be both a logical consequence of (1) and to be a logical implicant of (3) it converts the inductive argument into a deductive one. But clearly your being frightened does not follow logically from the fact of others having been frightened in the past."

Nor, as I had argued, does a particular value judgment follow from a general one by means of Hare's practical syllogism. Nowell-Smith continues.

"(b) If both the steps from (1) to (2) and from (2) to (3) are held to be inductive, we are worse off than we were before. Not only have we now two inductive leaps to make; one of them is such that we could never have any reason for making it. There are no tests for Y's being terrifying other than the fact that people have been terrified by them....

(c) It might be said that the step from (1) to (2) is quasi-analytic, as it surely is. But we are still no better off than before. For, on this interpretation, our evidence for the belief that Y's are terrifying is identical with our evidence for the belief that people have been frightened by them. And if we are allowed to pass from (2) to (3) we must also be allowed to pass direct from (1) to (3); so that the introduction of (2) is otiose."¹

Whatever precisely Hare had intended by his theory of 'consequential characteristics', either of the arguments, (a) or (c), would be sufficient to raise serious doubts about it.

Although Nowell-Smith argues against the thesis that an A-word, such as "terrifying", ~~does not denote~~ either causal or consequential properties, nevertheless (as is apparent from his recognizing that there is a "causal element" in A-sentences) he does not dismiss the notion that a 'reaction' has been caused. And since A-words are 'logically tied' to 'reactions' ("logically" here is in the sense of "logically odd"), the link between 'causes' and A-words is very close. A-words, he goes on to say, "imply the presence of causal properties without saying what these

¹This and preceding quotations, *Ethics*, p. 88.

properties are." This 'implication', in fact, is one of the main purposes of A-sentences. A-sentences, he suggests, provide "explanations", if "only at a very lowly level". The explanations, as the analysis of the 'elements' indicates, are of a 'predictive' and a 'generalizing' nature in that they may 'imply' that "most people would have been terrified"; and, secondly, as I have just mentioned, that they "imply the presence of unspecified causal properties because of which a thing causes the 'reaction' that it does; but they do not name such properties." He now points out why he had distinguished between the two questions, "For what job is the word...used?" and "Under what conditions is it proper to use the word...for that job?" In reply to the first question he says "A-words are used to give explanations and to make predictions"; and, in reply to the second, he adds "But their use for these purposes is only proper if the speaker has reasons of a certain sort which are not stated but contextually implied." Almost in the nature of an after-thought, important though it may be, he writes, "They are also used to express reactions; and it is this fact that tempts us to equate 'X's are nice' with 'I like X's'."¹ To equate "X's are nice" with the naturalistic formula "I like X's" would be wrong, he suggests, for two reasons. First, the sentence "X's are nice" serves other purposes (the 'predictive' and 'generalizing' purposes, that is); and, secondly, it would be "misleading, and therefore improper, if the speaker knew that his taste was peculiar and that this fact was important." While the speaker may be expressing the same 'reaction' with the sentence "X's are nice" as he does with "I like X's", it would be 'logically odd' for him to equate the expressions in view of the different purposes they serve.

¹Ethics, p. 90.

It may be seen from this summary of his analysis of A-words and sentences that, by comparison with the emotivists, Nowell-Smith has shifted the emphasis of 'non-cognitivism' considerably towards the 'descriptive' or 'cognitive' or 'naturalistic' elements of practical words. Whereas Stevenson would have said that the primary purpose of 'emotive' words (whether related to first or second-order dispositions, or whether simple expressions of emotion or moral value judgments) is to express and evoke or alter or reinforce attitudes, Nowell-Smith now suggests that the primary purpose of A-words, or rather words used with A-force, is "to give explanations and to make predictions." The 'subjective element' of A-words, recognized by the statement "they are also used to express reactions", is secondary, and is seen primarily as a logical obstacle to the expression of a naturalistic theory. While Stevenson had allowed that many of our 'emotive' words are rich in their descriptive meaning, and of course his second-pattern of analysis was designed to bring out such richness, he held to the view that the primary purpose of all such words is in some sense emotive or dynamic.

Section 4

In undertaking an assessment of the purposes for which practical discourse is used, Nowell-Smith again emphasizes the Wittgensteinian distinction that words are tools, rather than labels, and that, like tools, they may be used for different purposes. Even more important, he says, is that they "can be used to do more than one job on any given occasion." This is of such importance, he believes, that he introduces what he terms the "Janus-principle": "the principle that a given word can not only do two or more jobs at once but also is often, in the absence of counter-evidence or express withdrawal, presumed to be doing

two or more jobs at once."¹ The 'old model' of language which considers words as labels is, he asserts, "not just misleading; it is wholly wrong." Using the 'old model', moral philosophers had assumed that the value word "good", for example, had the same 'meaning' in all contexts; but with the 'new model' we may appreciate that "the words with which moral philosophers have especially to do, which are usually called 'value words', play many different parts." Nowell-Smith now makes a statement which clearly goes beyond anything that had been said by his predecessors.

"They ('value-words') are used to express tastes and preferences, to express decisions and choices, to criticize, grade, and evaluate, to advise, admonish, warn, persuade and dissuade, to praise, to encourage and reprove, to promulgate and draw₂ attention to rules; and doubtless for other purposes also."²

While recognizing the many purposes for which value-words are used, he chooses to begin his analysis with "choosing, deciding, and preferring". He grants that the giving of 'pride of place' to any one 'purpose' is "to some extent...as in an axiomatic system, a matter of choice." But he considers his choice "convenient" since he had begun his study "by posing the fundamental question as 'What shall I do?'." This statement, it should be noted, is not the same as his initial statement in the second paragraph of the book. There he had said that "the most important" of "practical questions" are "'What shall I do?' and 'What ought I to do?'". Later, as I have already indicated, he will argue that "What shall I do?" is 'logically' more fundamental than "What ought I to do?"; thus his decision now to emphasize "What shall I do?" is by no means trivial.

His first task is to stipulate how he intends to use the words "choosing", "deciding", and "preferring". "Choosing", as he will use

¹Ethics, p. 100.

²Ibid., p. 98.

the word, means "something that we do". He grants that it is possible to "choose without doing anything", such as in a man's choosing a place for his holiday next year. "In his case," Nowell-Smith says, "we may equally say that he had decided or made up his mind where to go. The decision is, as it were, put into cold storage to be taken out and acted on when the appropriate time comes." Although we may use the word "choose" as we would use "decision", Nowell-Smith intends to limit his use to "cases where choosing involves doing something at the time." One may make a decision, then, and not yet choose to do it; thus, he says, "a decision does not therefore entail a choice."

"But the relation between the two is, nevertheless, not a contingent one," he continues. "The fact that people choose to do what they have decided to do is not something that we discover by observation of human behaviour. The relation is one of quasi-implication. A man may decide, for example, to vote for Jones and be prevented from doing so by sickness or the cancellation of election. But, in default, of such explanation, there is no logical gap between deciding and doing."¹

Now although this is obviously an important stage in the development of his theory, it is, I believe, a questionable argument, and this may be seen by considering it from two approaches. First, it would appear that Nowell-Smith has again been misled by the analogy which he has seen between 'logical implication' and 'contextual implication'. In this passage, especially in view of the use of the term "quasi-implication", it is apparent that the word "logical" is used in the sense in which it is used in "logically odd". It would be 'logically odd', that is, to make a decision and not choose to do it. But since we are not dealing with strict logical implication, and since Nowell-Smith wishes to make a clear distinction between his uses of the words "decision" and "choosing", it is not logically contradictory for me to say, for example, "I decided to

¹Ethics, p. 101.

shoot the Prime Minister, but I am not choosing to do so". Nowell-Smith would of course grant this. As I have argued earlier, however, we cannot assess the question of 'logical oddness' simply from the context in which the statement is made, and we must involve ourselves in empirical procedures and value judgments in deciding whether 'reasons' for our 'decisions' as well as 'choices' are 'appropriate'---despite Nowell-Smith's denial in this and other instances. His procedure to overcome this objection, however, is to smuggle the 'reasons' into the context as if they were necessarily a part of all contexts. In this instance, he goes on to say that there are two, and only two, reasons for not choosing to do what I had decided to do; and he wishes to make the relation between deciding and choosing not simply a 'quasi-analytic' relationship but, as he says, an "analytic" relationship.

"... 'choosing' and 'deciding' are used in such a way that it is analytic to say that if a man has decided to do something and does not do it then either he was prevented or he changed his mind."¹

Thus, by definition, he would establish a logical link between 'choosing' and 'deciding'. This does not alter the fact, however, that in order to assess whether or not a person's particular choice or action is 'logically at odds' with his decision, we must assess 'by observation of his behaviour' whether he has been prevented or has changed his mind. We cannot simply say, in abstraction or isolation from a context, that people will choose to do what they have decided to do, and that there is no 'logical' gap between deciding and doing. In order to argue that there is no logical gap, and that the relation is 'analytic', Nowell-Smith would have to indulge in precisely the kind of traditional philosophy which his new logic, with its emphasis on 'contextual implications' was

¹Ethics, p. 102 (my underlining).

designed to supersede.

As I have mentioned, there are two ways of indicating that Nowell-Smith's argument is inadequate. The second way is to use an argumentum ad hominem in terms of the argument itself, and to indicate that a consequence of the argument is to make the concept of 'logically odd' otiose, at least in this context. An important part of his attempt to make the relation between 'deciding' and 'choosing' analytic was to introduce as one of the key 'reasons' the possibility that the speaker may have changed his mind. How, then, does Nowell-Smith use the phrase "he changed his mind"? When speaking about the man who has 'decided' where to go on his holiday, Nowell-Smith used the phrase "he made up his mind" as synonymous with "decided"; and in the context of the argument, since it could not be said to mean "chose", the act of 'changing one's mind' must be considered as a 'counter-decision' to the original decision---that is, a new decision. Thus a reconstruction of the preceding quotation in which Nowell-Smith seeks to establish a logical link between 'choosing' and 'deciding' would now be as follows:

"... 'choosing' and 'deciding' are used in such a way that it is analytic to say that if a man has decided to do something and does not do it then either he was prevented or he decided not to do it."

But if he had decided not to do it, then his choosing not to do it is not logically odd. Indeed, now to choose to 'follow' the initial decision would be 'logically odd'. If this is the case (and considering that we would excuse a person who had been prevented from doing something) one can never say that a particular choice is 'logically odd', even if it appears 'at odds' with a previous 'decision-stating' sentence. Nowell-Smith must allow, then, that anything I choose to do is not 'logically odd'; and since, as I have argued, the use of the tool 'logical oddness'

in assessing reasons for choices is itself based on a value judgment, the theory is thus committed to a form of the Socratic paradox---that I always choose to do what I morally approve of doing. It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that so long as Nowell-Smith wishes to distinguish between the uses of the words "decision" and "choosing" as he does (and I am not questioning this distinction), he cannot maintain that there is either an analytic or a quasi-analytic link between them.

The distinction he would make between the uses of "choosing" and "preferring" is of special interest since in analysing these words Nowell-Smith introduces the word "good" for the first time as an object of analysis. This argument is of importance to him later, since by assuming it, as I shall indicate later, he is able to suggest that the fundamental use of value words is in choosing and advising rather than in value judgments which 'appraise' or give 'verdicts'.¹ "The word 'good'," he says, "can be used to express a preference and when so used is always a concealed comparative." If a speaker's statement of preference (in other words a value judgment) is challenged, "he must be prepared" to make a comparison between the thing he terms "good" and other things not so good. Sentences which express 'preferences' are, then, value sentences used to assert or imply that something is better than another. But Nowell-Smith distinguishes between sentences expressing 'preferences' and those expressing 'decisions'.

"Preference begins," he continues, "with thinking this course better than that and ends with deciding that it is the best, and the sentences that we use to express preferences are tied to those used for expressing decisions in the same quasi-analytic way that the latter are tied to doing. There is no need therefore to try to bridge the gap between 'this is the best thing for me to do' and 'I shall do this'. In deciding that something is the best thing for him to do a man has already decided to do it."

¹See Ethics, p. 170.

There is, then, he suggests, a quasi-analytic link between a sentence expressing a 'preference' and a sentence expressing a 'decision'; and the same kind of quasi-analytic link between the sentence expressing a 'decision' and a sentence expressing the act of 'choosing to do it'. If the quasi-analytic link is the same kind, then my arguments against his distinction between "decision" and "choosing", may apply equally against his distinction between "preference" and "decision". This is to suggest, then, that there is a 'gap' between 'preferences', on the one hand, and 'decisions' and 'choices' on the other.

Nowell-Smith is obviously concerned with the type of objection which I have offered, for he goes on to say that "choice would be an unfathomable mystery" if a sentence expressing a 'preference' and the sentence expressing the 'decision' to take it "were interpreted as being only 'synthetically' connected with each other." "A mysterious gap would always emerge," he continues, "for it would make sense to say; 'I prefer this course to any other (or this is the best course for me), but shall I do it?'" This, however, is a 'loaded' way of stating the alternative. It is not even a convincing persuasive argument for a philosopher to say "The relation is either quasi-analytic or else it is an unfathomable mystery." As I have suggested earlier, Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson would not have been swayed by such an argument. Possibly the relation between a sentence stating a preference and a sentence expressing the decision to take it is ultimately, like so many problems facing us, an unfathomable mystery.

Perhaps the most paradoxical consequence of Nowell-Smith's theory is one that emerges most clearly in his important chapter "Reasons for Choosing". In that chapter he directly considers the question of "giving reasons for our decision", and he begins by pointing out that the phrase

"good reason" is ambiguous.

"It may mean 'morally good reason', that is to say a reason which justifies an action and exempts the agent from censure; or it may mean 'logically good reason', that is to say, a reason which leaves no further reason for the question 'What shall I do?' or for the question 'Why did you (he) do that?'. "

As we may expect, Nowell-Smith will use "good reason" in the latter sense; and he later emphasizes that "by a 'logically good reason'" he does "not mean a morally good reason."¹ In the earlier context he explains his intention.

"In accordance with the principles laid down in the preceding chapter, our task is not to discover propositions that entail a decision to act but propositions which are such that, once they are granted, it would be logically odd either to ask for further reasons for doing something or for a further explanation of why someone did it."²

He indicates, further, that "precisely the same vocabulary is used both in deliberating ante rem and in explaining post rem why someone did what he did." Now the main point of contention in the preceding quotation is the phrase "once they are granted". In a case of a question concerning a 'practical' problem, as I have argued, if I agree (or we may now use the word "grant") that a person's 'reason' or 'explanation' for a decision, or a choice, is 'appropriate' or 'not logically odd', I do so only because I have made a value judgment agreeing with his. Conversely, if I think that a person's question or reason is 'logically odd', I do so by making a value judgment which disagrees with the value judgment expressed in the sentence or sentences giving his 'reasons'. Thus the phrase "once they are granted" is all-important and cannot be by-passed without serious consideration. It is indeed fundamental to the whole question of 'logical oddity' in the preceding attempt to distinguish between a 'morally good reason' and a 'logically good reason'. But in

¹Ethics, p. 114.

²Ethics, p. 105 (my underlining).

'granting' the 'appropriateness' of a 'reason', I must say, in effect, I have a 'pro-attitude' for your 'reason'. It would appear that in order to apply the phrase "logically odd" to 'reasons' for decisions and choices we must conclude, despite Nowell-Smith's wishes to the contrary, that the phrases "logically good reason" (in his special sense of "logically") and "morally good reason" are indistinguishable.

Nowell-Smith next considers the question "Are all the reasons that can be given of the same logical type?" And he answers, in effect, "in one sense, no", and "in another sense, yes". The answer is 'no' to the type of theory as postulated by Hobbes, "according to whom all action is caused by desire or aversion",¹ if "desire" and "aversion" are considered as what we have termed "occurrence" words. Hobbes' mistake, according to Nowell-Smith, is in believing that "motive-explanations all conform to one pattern and specifically to the itch-scratch pattern...."² This is not to suggest that an explanation in terms of the 'itch-scratch pattern' is never appropriate; but that to use the word "desire" as if it always had reference to feelings, and not also to what we have termed "dispositions", would be logically misleading. As I have suggested earlier,³ a major difficulty with Ayer's first version of the emotive theory of values was that he tended to assume what Nowell-Smith has now termed the "itch-scratch" analysis of "feelings". While Nowell-Smith would, then, reject this kind of 'single-pattern' analysis, he does not, however, completely reject Hobbes' theory. Hobbes had suggested a general distinction, that is, between "endeavour toward" and "endeavour fromward" which could have a wider reference than "desire" and "aversion" in the 'occurrence' sense. Nowell-Smith believes that there is good reason for this kind of general

¹Ethics, p. 106.

²Ibid., p. 111.

³Above, Ch. II, p. 96.

distinction, but, in order to avoid the possibility that his theory might be misunderstood if he uses a word like "desire", he adopts the course of inventing "a new generic word". Like Stevenson, he chooses the word "attitude"; but instead of Stevenson's "approval" and "disapproval", or Hobbes' "endeavour toward" and "endeavour fromward", Nowell-Smith uses the terms "pro-attitude" and "con-attitude". As we shall see, he would use this distinction in a different way from Stevenson's use of "approval" and "disapproval". To illustrate 'pro-' and 'con-attitude' words he offers the following lists:

List A

like
Approve of
Enjoy
Love
Want
Accept
Pleasure
Comfort
Desire
Happiness
Interested in
Fond of
Try to achieve
Try to acquire
Try to obtain
Try to prolong

List B

Hate
Dislike
Disapprove of
Detest
Reject
Decline
Shy away from
Pain
Discomfort
Aversion
Try to avoid
Try to prevent
Try to get rid of
Try to stop
Try to avert

He goes on to say that he has "deliberately included in these lists concepts of different logical types in order to make clear that the use of 'having a pro-attitude towards' should not be restricted to any one pattern". Whether he is suggesting it or not, the fact that he has included Stevenson's "approve of" and "disapprove of" in these lists would not warrant any suggestion that Stevenson had used these words in any 'single-pattern' sense. Stevenson had not analysed the word "attitude" in any detail, and, like Nowell-Smith, he recognized that it was a vague term. He had said, however, that within his class of 'attitudes'

were "purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires, and so on,"¹ and his use of the terms "approval" and "disapproval" was intended to express much the same 'pro' and 'con' distinction among these attitudes as Nowell-Smith's use of "pro-attitudes" and "con-attitudes". It is of interest that Stevenson says in a footnote that his use of the word "attitude" is "in much the same broad sense that R.B. Perry gives to 'interest'." Now in his Realms of Value (a later book than the one mentioned by Stevenson) Perry uses the word "interest" in a manner verbally similar to Nowell-Smith's use of "attitude". Perry writes that "the word 'interest' points to attitudes of for and against...", and the word "is to be taken as a class name for such names as 'liking'-'disliking', 'loving'-'hating', 'hoping'-'fearing', 'desiring'-'avoiding', and countless other kindred names."² If there is a difference between Nowell-Smith's lists of 'pro'- and 'con-attitudes' and those suggested by the others, it would be in that he has included what might be called 'doing-words', such as "try to achieve" and "try to prolong". He is aware of, and unmoved by the possible criticism "that many of the items on the list would not normally be said to have anything to do with 'attitudes' at all. The word 'attitude' has been selected," he adds, "just because it is vague. The important point that I wish to bring out lies in the words 'Pro' and 'Con'."³ Since language used to express efforts to 'achieve', 'acquire', 'obtain', and 'prolong' might well be considered, however, within Stevenson's list of 'purposes', 'aspirations', 'wants', 'preferences', 'desires', and so on, it is a debatable point whether there is any significant difference in intention between the two in their proposed analyses of 'attitude-expressing' language. One difference, in fact, is that Nowell-

¹Stevenson, EL, p. 3.
³Ethics, p. 112.

²Perry, Realms of Value, pp. 6-7.

Smith tends to blur the distinction between A-words and D-words, and he thus comes closer to 'naturalism' than Stevenson would condone. This will become apparent in my subsequent argument.

One of the two major problems for moral philosophy for Stevenson, we recall, was the problem of proving and supporting ethical judgments. The practical (we might say 'moralistic') motivation for Stevenson was, as we have seen, the settling of ethical disagreements. To do this he was prepared to go so far as to make an assumption which "one may even cling to...in desperation, as the only hope of settling issues that may otherwise lead to serious discord."¹ That assumption was that "all disagreement in attitude is rooted in disagreement in belief." Thus he argued that "any statement about any matter of fact which any speaker considers likely to alter attitudes may be adduced as a reason for or against an ethical judgment."² A 'good' reason, we may assume, would be a 'reason' which led to the resolution of a disagreement in attitudes of two or more people, or the resolution of a conflict of attitudes in an individual; and the relation between that 'reason' and a value judgment, as we have seen, is fundamentally psychological rather than logical. He allowed of course that a disagreement in attitudes could also be resolved by non-rational means, such as when a person tries to alter another person's attitudes by means of value judgments and other 'persuasive instruments' rather than by rational argument concerning 'beliefs'. Such non-rational procedures would not be termed "reasons", however, for, as he had said, "if any ethical dispute is not rooted in disagreement in belief, then no reasoned solution of any sort is possible."³ How, then, does

¹Above, Ch. III, p. 170.

²Stevenson, EL, p. 114.

³Stevenson, EL, p. 138.

Nowell-Smith's use of the distinction between 'pro-' and 'con-attitudes' compare with Stevenson's approach?

The most obvious difference is of course that Nowell-Smith wishes to maintain that there is a quasi-logical relationship between 'reasons', or 'explanations', and 'choices', or 'decisions'. Now instead of considering the expression of, say, a 'con-attitude' word as being indicative either of a person's disagreement in attitude with another person, or of a conflict of attitudes in an individual, Nowell-Smith contends that the use of such a word may be considered as a reason, or an explanation for a decision, or a choice.

"Sentences containing pro- and con-words," he says, "provide good--that is to say, logically complete--explanations of choice. If you ask a man why he is gardening or why he is going to turn on the wireless and he says that he enjoys gardening or wants to hear some music, he has given a reply that makes a repetition of the question logically odd."¹

He tends to pay more attention to 'pro-words' than to 'con-words', but he regards their 'logical behaviour' as being the same, as may be seen from the preceding quotation. Speaking of 'pro-words' only, however, he proceeds to write the following passage:

"Pro-words differ from each other in many ways, but they all have this in common that they provide logically impeccable explanations of why someone chose to do something. They also provide logically impeccable reasons for deciding to do or not to do something. The 'reason for doing' which is expressed by such a phrase as 'because I want...' or 'because I enjoy...' may be counteracted by other and more weighty reasons for making the opposite choice; but each pro-sentence refers to a reason and, in the absence of counter-reasons, it would be logically odd not to choose."²

It is regrettable that he does not more thoroughly analyse what could be meant by saying that a reason "may be counteracted by other and more weighty reasons." What is meant by the phrase "more weighty"? How do

¹Ethics, p. 113.

²Ethics, p. 114.

we make such a judgment? Unless we are given a satisfactory answer to these questions the theory may be said to lead to difficulties. If I say, for example, that I did something "because I enjoyed doing it", and if it is allowed that any such reason "may be counteracted by a more weighty reason", then, in any particular context, how can it be definitely said that the initial reason I gave is "logically impeccable"? Would there not always be some uncertainty?---There is a further and more serious difficulty as we shall see shortly.

Nowell-Smith emphasizes the point we have seen earlier that by a 'logically good reason' he does not mean a 'morally good reason'. This, as I have argued is a debatable distinction within his theory.

"By a 'logically good reason'," he writes, "I do not mean a morally good reason; I mean anything which, when offered as an explanation of why someone chose to act as he did, has the force of making further questioning logically odd."¹

The test-case for such a view would obviously be the giving of reasons for a morally reprehensible action; and Nowell-Smith considers this possibility. If we ask a man who is torturing a cat why he is doing it, and if he replies "because I enjoy it", then, according to Nowell-Smith, "the reply does not give a morally good reason; but logically it is impeccable." Thus, by definition, Nowell-Smith seals off any further questioning of a 'reason' (despite the fact, as we have just seen, that it is possible that there are 'more weighty reasons'). The effect of this is to say that "logically good reason" is equivalent in its use to the word "motive"; and if a person can cite his 'motive' for acting as he did, he has thereby provided a 'logically good reason'. And since Nowell-Smith appears to use the word "motive" in the same way as he uses "pro-" and "con-attitude", he thus says that "anything which could be offered as a logically good

¹Ethics, p. 114.

reason for or against doing anything must be included in the lists" of 'pro-' and 'con-attitude' words.

"The proposition that any statement which gives a logically complete reason for choice must include a reference to a pro- or a con-attitude is thus a frank tautology."¹

If, then, it is 'appropriate' to continue to ask "why?" of a person's reason or explanation, this is indicative of the fact that the alleged reason or explanation is not a good reason or explanation, and makes no reference to either a pro- or con-attitude. It is his intention to indicate later, he says, that "deontological words (right, obligation, duty, and their cognates) never give logically complete reasons for choice."

"To put the point in a paradox which I shall defend later," he writes, "'believing that something is the right thing to do' and 'believing that something is my duty' are never good reasons for doing it and such beliefs never explain why people do what they do."²

We must wait, then, for an explanation of this point---although, in view of my criticism of his use of the concept of 'logical oddness' it would appear that the paradox is only mildly startling by comparison with other paradoxes to which the theory leads. It may be wondered, that is, if, on the basis of his distinctions, any reasons he could offer may be said to be good reasons. This possibility may be supported by further consideration of his theory of 'pro-' and 'con-attitudes' as he has introduced it.

As Stevenson has said in his review-article, Nowell-Smith tends to emphasize 'personal' rather than 'inter-personal' problems; and his manner of using the distinction of 'pro-' and 'con-attitudes' is another example of Stevenson's point. Nowell-Smith's emphasis, that is, does not suggest any concern to resolve the 'disagreement in attitudes' that would be

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 115.

indicated if two people who were judging a person or object, or who were trying to decide a course of action, expressed conflicting statements. His emphasis, despite the possibility of such a 'conflict' or despite problems faced by an individual when considering alternative decisions or choices, is rather on whether an individual could provide a good reason for a particular decision, or choice. If in making his distinction he can say "I like" or "I dislike", "I approve of" or "I disapprove of", "I love" or "I detest" (and so on throughout the lists of pro- and con-words), then he has provided a "logically impeccable reason" for his decision, or choice. Such a view, however, may be seen to lead, again, to a serious paradox if we consider a case of inter-personal disagreement. We may again consider the example of the Aldermaston marcher¹ (in which I had deliberately used one of the con-attitude phrases from Nowell-Smith's list, that is "disapprove of"). Now it is reasonable to suppose that in any such argument B would, at some point, say or clearly indicate that the 'reason' for his persistent questioning is that he "approves of" the policy of having 'the bomb'. Thus we would have a situation where the conflicting sentences "I approve of 'the bomb'" and "I disapprove of 'the bomb'" are each said to be "logically impeccable reasons" for the conflicting attitudes. Later in the book Nowell-Smith warns against speaking of "conflicting moral attitudes as 'contradictory',"² since this might run the risk of supposing that moral discourse is analogous to empirical discourse. For the sake of argument I shall abide by his wish and instead of saying that the sentences "I approve of 'the bomb'" and "I disapprove of 'the bomb'" are 'logically contradictory', I shall use "logically" in much the same sense as he uses it in "logical oddness"

¹Above, p. 340.

²Ethics, p. 195, also p. 268.

and I shall say simply that the conflicting sentences are 'logically at odds' with each other. (This, I believe, is to understate my case). His theory is thus committed to allowing that there may be situations in which two people provide 'logically impeccable reasons' for statements which are 'logically at odds' with each other. What purpose could be served in such instances by referring to the 'logically at odds' reasons as each being 'logically impeccable'? The word "reason" is used in a trivial sense if its only purpose is to indicate, in effect, that a person understands his motives or knows what he is doing.

This completes my summary and assessment of Nowell-Smith's exposition of the basic distinctions for the use of his new 'logical apparatus'. If my criticism has been sound, it is apparent that, like Hare's argument, Nowell-Smith's has a serious weakness, and that this weakness is in his central thesis. That thesis, as I have indicated at the beginning of the chapter, was designed primarily to indicate that no 'logical gap' exists between 'reasons' and value judgments, and decisions, and choices. This is essentially the same problem which had been posed by Hume. While Ayer and Stevenson had followed Hume in accepting that there is a gap and that it is logically unbridgeable, Hare had tried to bridge it and had failed. Nowell-Smith, with the same motive as Hare, has rested his case on his use of the concepts of "logical oddness" and "contextual implications". While there is undoubtedly much of value in his analysis of language, his central thesis, like Hare's is unconvincing and to this point Hume's problem remains unresolved. The weakness of Nowell-Smith's basic thesis affects later arguments. Since the book is of such a comprehensive nature, I shall be considerably more selective in my choice of remaining arguments. It will of course be necessary to consider his analysis of G-words, and of the words "good", "right", and "ought". I shall also

consider his arguments against the 'Persuasive Theory' which he, like Hare, would wish to reject.

Section 5

Nowell-Smith presents his main discussion of G-words in his chapter "Advice and Exhortation"; and it is in this chapter that he also makes his major attempt to dissociate himself from what he has termed the "Persuasive Theory". He does not mention the name of any of the philosophers who have said, in their various ways, that moral judgments are 'persuasive', but since Stevenson would appear to be the most formidable opponent I shall consider his theory as the representative of such theories. The attempt to reject the 'Persuasive Theory' comes at the end of the chapter, but the argument presupposes distinctions made earlier in the chapter which should be considered, in addition of course to his analysis of G-words. I would not wish to suggest, in any event, that the 'rejection' of the 'persuasive' theory is the only matter of importance in the chapter, since what he has to say earlier is of interest as a contribution to the tradition of the analysis of 'practical language'.

He begins the chapter with the following statement:

"Practical language is not only used for making up our own minds what to do; it is also used for telling others what to do, and there are four main types of situation in which we do this."

As we have already seen, Nowell-Smith offers a more detailed list of purposes of 'practical language' than have the earlier philosophers we have considered.¹ Nevertheless, with his emphasis on the question "What shall I do?" as the fundamental 'practical' question, he has not as yet clearly indicated a 'purpose' or 'function' of practical language which could not be considered as a 'species' of the general purpose expressed

¹Above, p. 349.

by the word "choosing". He implicitly grants this in the preceding quotation when he makes the general statement that "practical language is not only used for making up our own minds...." A difficulty apparently resulting from this emphasis has been, as I have indicated, that it tends to pass over the problem emphasized by Stevenson when he says that there may be a basic and apparently irreconcilable disagreement in attitudes. Nowell-Smith, as I have pointed out, stresses such a disagreement in rejecting 'objectivist' theories, but in other crucial contexts in which he has been postulating his own special theory he has ignored it. We must consider, then, whether Stevenson's criticism is overcome by Nowell-Smith's classification of the "four main types of situation" in which we use practical language "for telling others what to do". Although in the chapter we are discussing he intends only to treat what he terms "Advice" and "Exhortation", we may nevertheless consider the classification separately before considering the two specific types. If a situation indicative of 'practical disagreement' is to be presented one would assume that it would be among the four types. These are as follows:

- "(a) Cases of giving instructions about the best, simplest, most convenient, etc., way of doing what the recipient of the instructions has already decided to do or of achieving an end that he has already decided to aim at. These cases do not seem to give rise to any philosophical difficulties since, although such instructions cannot be identified with hypothetical statements in the form 'You will only succeed if you do...', their value as instructions depends mainly in the truth of the hypotheticals with which they are intimately connected; and this is an empirical matter.
- (b) Cases in which Jones tries to help Smith to solve a problem of choice, which is not just a problem about means or methods. I shall call these cases of Advice.
- (c) Cases in which Jones tries to persuade Smith to do something by using the language of advice without the proper contextual implications. I shall call these cases of Exhortation. The choice of the words 'advice' and 'exhortation' to distinguish the two types of case is somewhat arbitrary; but the distinction between the cases is real and important.

- (d) Cases in which Jones commands or orders Smith to do something."¹

In view of Stevenson's criticism I believe it may be said that there is a prima facie case for saying that there are at least two further types which are ignored by this classification---at least it may be said that Nowell-Smith's manner of expressing the four types does not do justice to two other possible types. In expressing Types (b) and (c), Nowell-Smith appears to assume that Type (b) is typical of cases in which language is used to tell other people what to do while using "the proper contextual implications." As he has expressed it, however, he presents Jones as trying to help Smith to solve Smith's problem of choice; and it is assumed that Smith welcomes such assistance. This emphasis could be misleading and, supposing that Nowell-Smith's "proper contextual implications" could be used, a case may be made for recognizing another type which could be expressed as follows:

- (e) Cases in which Jones and Smith have been in disagreement about what to do, and in which each of them is trying to support his own arguments by means of "the proper contextual implications". Such cases may be termed Practical Disagreement.

Now in such cases, as we have already seen, the terminology of "contextual implications" and "logical oddness" would serve no practical purpose if both Jones and Smith provide 'reasons' for their choices. Furthermore, as we have also seen, the terminology would lead to the paradox that 'logically at odds' statements may each be said to be 'logically impeccable'. While this is a disagreeable conclusion it is one that Nowell-Smith should not have ignored.

The second possibility overlooked by the four-fold classification is the following:

¹Ethics, p. 145.

- (f) Cases in which Jones and Smith have been in disagreement about what to do, and in which each of them is trying to support his arguments by 'rational' discussion of the 'facts' of the situation.

This type of course begs the question for the kind of view proposed by Hume, Ayer, and Stevenson. The presupposition is that in at least some cases 'practical disagreements' may in some way be resolved by discussion of 'beliefs' or 'facts' without using Nowell-Smith's tools of "contextual implication". In a persuasive defence of this question-begging, however, I would point out that Nowell-Smith's classification begs the question for his own thesis; and if he uses his classification in order to reject what he terms the "Persuasive Theory" then his procedure is questionable. The strongest persuasive argument for recognizing my Type (f), however, is offered by Nowell-Smith himself when, later in the chapter, he postulates three methods of argument for 'redirecting attitudes'; and the first two are the types of 'rational' argument over 'beliefs' or 'facts' which both Ayer and Stevenson would allow as the basic methods of argument in a situation in which there is a disagreement in attitudes. The two types of argument are those in which, first, a person "may point out certain probable consequences" of his proposed action, and, secondly, that another person's "pro-attitude is a special case of something towards which (he)... has a general con-attitude."¹ It should be noted of course that Nowell-Smith does not use the tool of 'logical oddness' to 'redirect attitudes'. It is apparent, in any event, that my Type (f) case would have to be included in his Type (c),² and that he would probably want to say that in my example Jones is "using the language of advice without the proper contextual implications"---although it is now dubious that he could say this, unless he were willing to allow that the arguments for 'redirecting

¹ Ethics, p. 156.

² Ibid., p. 158.

attitudes' were non-rational, or possibly even 'persuasive', and he could hardly do that. By this time, in any case, I believe that I have cast sufficient doubt on the tools of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implication' to warrant questioning any classification which presupposes it. In further support of Stevenson, one may assert as a challenge the question I have begged. It is difficult to deny, that is, that at least some 'practical disagreements' are resolved after discussion of 'beliefs' or 'facts'; and if we are to recognize types of situations in which we use language to try to get people to do something we want them to do, and they do not want to do it, then this Type (f) classification of the use of language cannot be ignored.

It is in his analysis of "Advice" that, as I have mentioned, Nowell-Smith presents his main treatment of G-sentences.

"G-words," he writes, "are those that imply not merely that the relevant person is likely to have a certain reaction, but that they ought to have it."¹

As I have remarked earlier,² G- and A-words are not easily able to be distinguished, and Nowell-Smith now emphasizes this point.

"We have already seen that they (G-words) cannot be sharply distinguished from A-words, partly because the same word (e.g. 'eligible') can have an A-force in some contexts and a G-force in others, and partly because there are some reactions that are so universally encouraged and others that are so universally condemned that it is impossible to use the A-word concerned without being taken to encourage or condemn the reaction. In default of an express withdrawal of the G-force, the A-word always carries it."³

There is a similarity, as I have suggested, between Nowell-Smith's G- and A-words, and Stevenson's words for his first- and second-patterns of analysis, although Stevenson would not have suggested that there is any logical distinction possible between the two extremes. This poses a

¹Ethics, p. 151

²Above, p. 322.

³Ethics, p. 151.

question which we may now consider.

As we would expect, Nowell-Smith seeks to avoid any suggestion that he is presenting an 'objectivist' analysis of G-words. "Just as it is useless to represent A-words as standing for objective properties," he says, "so it is equally useless to treat G-words in the same way." But what purpose is recognized, we must ask, in saying that G-words are different from A-words? Referring to an example of Jones's advising Smith to see a film, Nowell-Smith writes that "Jones might have said, not that it is entertaining, but that it is worth seeing."

"The difference lies in the fact that, while the A-word is more specific—(it is the fact that Smith will be entertained that gives the remark its point as advice)—the G-word is less specific but indicates more clearly that it is advice which is being given. 'Worth seeing' bears on its face a hortatory, commending force that 'entertaining' does not. The film may be worth seeing either because it is entertaining or because it is instructive; and each of these implies that it has certain causal properties. But the gerundive phrase neither states what these properties are nor indicates whether they are such as to entertain or to instruct. Yet even so it is not a mere prediction; its use contextually implies (under Rule 2) that Jones believes it to have some of the properties and (under Rule 3) that he believes the properties to be relevant to Smith's problem of choice."¹

The use of the phrases "more specific", "less specific", and "more clearly", in the first sentence would seem to indicate, however, that there is not a clear distinction between A- and G-words; and since Nowell-Smith disqualifies himself from making any genuine classifications of words in isolation from their contexts, it would appear that the distinction cannot be clearly made at all. He admits this, in part, in the following passage:

"It would appear, then, that there is little to distinguish a G-word from an A-word, and, in the contexts of choosing and advising, this is so; for, in these contexts, A-words are being used as G-words and differ from them in being for the

¹Ethics, p. 152.

most part more explicit as to the causal properties contextually implied."

Nevertheless he wishes to insist on a kind of logical distinction, and, he suggests, one distinction is that "while A-words are often used in non-practical contexts, G-words are only used in practical contexts."¹

(This is an important statement to which I shall again refer).

"There is nothing odd," he writes, "about discussing the climbability of a mountain even when no one concerned is thinking about climbing and a man who says that it is climbable is not yet urging anyone to climb it. On the other hand the prime role of G-sentences is to urge, exhort, command, and advise and, while there is nothing odd about 'It's climbable, but I don't advise you to climb it' (1), there is something odd about 'It's worth climbing, but I don't advise you to climb it' (2), or 'You ought to climb it, but I don't advise you to' (3)."²

He goes on to say that the "one general difference between A- and G-sentences" is that G-sentences "must have a pro- or a con-force", that they "are always explicitly for or against something." "A-sentences, on the other hand," he continues, "are neutral unless the context shows which force they have."³

This is a questionable argument, however, and is dependent primarily on what might be called the 'contextual ambiguity' of the word "climbable". I shall argue that in the manner in which Nowell-Smith presents his argument, the word "climbable" cannot be considered as an A-word in the sentence "It's climbable, but I don't advise you to climb it"; that is, it must be considered as a D-word, or rather a word used with D-force. He has said, we recall, that "among the typical A-words are: Terrifying, hair-raising, disappointing, disgusting, beneficial, ridiculous, funny, amusing, sublime."⁴ Their common distinguishing feature was that "each of them is connected with a specific human 'reaction'," with the word

¹Ibid., p. 154 (my underlining).

³Ibid., p. 155.

²Ibid., p. 154.

⁴Ethics, p. 84.

"reaction" widely construed to include "attitudes that people might take up, emotions they might feel, things that happen to them and things that they do." With such a wide interpretation almost any 'doing' word could be made to fit the definition, along with 'emotive' words at the other extreme, such as "Hurrah" and "Alas". If we are to maintain a distinction between Descriptive-words and Aptness-words, however, there will be borderline cases, such as, for example, when Sir Edmund Hillary appraises a mountain and says "It's climbable" (meaning "In all probability I shall be able to climb it"), and when he says "It's climbable!" (in the 'reaction' or 'Aptness' sense which he might have used when he stood with Tensing on the peak of Everest). If it is suggested that "It's climbable" in the first of Sir Edmund's uses is a 'reaction', then of course this would completely blur the distinction which Nowell-Smith had made at the outset of the book when he distinguished between 'theoretical' and 'practical' discourse. Now although he could hardly allow this interpretation, this is what he has done when he rests his argument on the premiss I have previously quoted, that is: "while A-words are often used in non-practical contexts, G-words are only used in practical contexts." If in the sentence "It's climbable" (or any other indicative mood sentence in which an A-word is said to be used), the word "climbable" is said to be in a "non-practical context", then it must be said to be in a "theoretical context". Since it is the key word of the sentence it must be a 'theoretical' and not a 'practical' word. No other explanation is feasible within Nowell-Smith's argument. In such a context, however, the word is no longer appropriately termed an A-word, but must be said to be a D-word. Such a word, if normally considered as an A-word, would then, in its 'theoretical' context, be an A-word in an "inverted commas" sense (to borrow

Hare's distinction).¹ It would not be used, that is, with an A-force. If Nowell-Smith maintains that in his example it is a genuine A-word, or is used with an A-force, then it must be said to be used in a 'practical' and not a 'theoretical' context; and in a 'practical' context, as he has allowed, "there is little to distinguish a G-word from an A-word...." I would thus conclude that Nowell-Smith cannot support the distinction he would wish to maintain between A- and G-words (and, indeed, in some instances, between A- and D-words). It would appear, then, that the utility of the attempted distinction is that it, like Stevenson's first- and second-patterns of analysis, may serve for the purpose of analysing 'practical' words ranging from 'descriptively vague' practical words to 'descriptively rich' practical words.

We may now proceed to the section entitled "The redirection of attitudes"² in which Nowell-Smith considers the "Persuasive Theory". In discussing this section we must recall that he has been concerned so far with the 'context of advice', and the paradigm for 'cases of Advice' was his Type (b) situation ("Cases in which Jones tries to help Smith solve a problem of choice, which is not just a problem about means and methods.") The presupposition is that Jones and Smith will be concerned with the giving and receiving of advice within "the proper contextual implications". Now I have suggested that this paradigm may be misleading if it neglects what I have termed 'practical disagreement'. At first sight, however, this would appear to be the type of situation which would emerge from Nowell-Smith's hypothetical case.

"An important factor emerges in the context of advice," he writes, "that cannot be present in the context of choice. If Smith asks Jones what is the best thing for him to do the terms of the

¹Hare, LM, p. 124.

²Ethics, p. 155 ff.

problem are set for him (Smith) by his actual pro- and con-attitudes towards the different situation that different choices would bring about. But the terms of the problem are not so set for Jones, since Jones may disapprove of Smith's pro- and con-attitudes in a way that Smith himself cannot, just because they are his attitudes. Jones's task, qua adviser, is to solve Smith's problem of choice, to which Smith's attitudes are alone relevant. The fact that Jones approves or disapproves is not, by itself, a good reason for Smith's doing anything any more than 'because he is blind' is."

It should be noted, in passing, that the final statement in this quotation would readily be allowed by Stevenson since, for him, what constituted a 'reason' was not the approval or disapproval expressed by a value judgment, but a 'belief' which led to the altering or reinforcing of attitudes expressed in the value judgments. Stevenson's main problem has not yet emerged, however, for in the preceding quotation, despite Jones's disapproval of Smith's attitudes, Smith is yet in the position of seeking and wanting advice, and Jones is yet in the role of adviser. Nowell-Smith would appear to be about to alter that situation, however, with the following passage:

"But the terms of the problem are not set for Jones, since Jones has his own problem of whether to accept the role of adviser or not. If he disapproves of Smith's attitudes he may prefer not to solve Smith's problem but to alter it. Thus if Smith asks if the film at the Super is a good one in a context where it is clear that his problem is 'Shall I go to it this evening?', Jones may reply 'You oughtn't to go to the cinema at all; you've got some work to do'."¹

He then cites several more examples in which Jones is trying to redirect Smith's attitudes. Quite rightly, however, he concludes that the apparent disapproval "makes little difference to the logic of advice." The respective roles of Jones and Smith have not changed, although "the discussion has shifted onto different ground." Nowell-Smith now goes on to indicate that there are three methods of argument in which Jones might re-

¹Ethics, pp. 155-6.

direct Smith's attitudes, and these ways, as I have said,¹ closely resemble the general methods of moral argument proposed by Ayer and Stevenson. Since I have outlined the first two (my purpose being to indicate that Nowell-Smith must recognize a type of case which is not included in the four paradigms he has provided),² I shall now summarize only the third. In this situation Jones "may exhibit his own con-attitude... without giving any reason". Nowell-Smith grants that the third way "does not by itself constitute any reason", but "the very fact that Smith asks Jones (and not someone else) for advice shows that he has a general pro-attitude towards doing whatever Jones suggests, simply because Jones suggests it."³

At this point, to quote Stevenson, "where Nowell-Smith seems about to discuss inter-personal problems, he veers off into criticisms of what he calls the 'Persuasive Theory' of ethics, claiming that it makes far too much of persuasion."⁴ Stevenson's point is well made; and before discussing what Nowell-Smith says about the 'Persuasive Theory', it is worth emphasizing that point. As Stevenson says of Nowell-Smith's examples, we have not been presented with a situation in which both Smith and Jones are involved in a genuine 'disagreement in attitude'. Even in the example of the third type of argument for redirecting attitudes, the man seeking advice has "a general pro-attitude" towards doing whatever the adviser suggests. Stevenson proposes an example of the same type as my earlier example of the disagreement over 'banning the bomb'. In Stevenson's example two statesmen are "trying to decide whether or not they ought to involve their country in a war."

¹Above, p. 368.

³Ethics, pp. 156-7.

⁴Op.cit., Mind, p. 408.

²See my type (f) case, p. 368.

"The problem is now inter-personal;" writes Stevenson, "nor can it properly be described as two concurrent personal problems in which each man alternates between the role of advised and adviser. For if it should happen, as they discuss the matter, that A comes to decide on war and B comes to decide on peace, we shall have a situation in which each is free from his personal indecision or conflict; but we shall also have a situation in which effective decision of each man is blocked by that of the other."¹

Stevenson goes on to make the point that Nowell-Smith has thus ignored the type of situation in which an "interpersonal issue could not be settled by the use of reasons." This type of situation, it should be noted, is not treated later in the book and the criticism by Stevenson may be generalized.

"So however much Nowell-Smith's emphasis on contextual implications is calculated to establish friendly relations with naturalists, he doesn't give the naturalists what they most want---something that will be sufficient to establish interpersonal agreement in ethics (for the seemingly gerundive, as well as the other uses of the terms) by use of the methods of science. I think he should be more explicit in acknowledging this."

In view of my earlier arguments I must agree. This is of course no small matter, for it would completely undermine his use of the 'new logical apparatus' in which his special tools of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implications' have been so prominent. This is not to say that there is nothing of value in his analysis for obviously the emphasis on 'contexts' demanded by the doctrine that 'the meaning of a word is in its use' is of considerable importance---although this doctrine may be employed without Nowell-Smith's special 'apparatus', as other philosophical analysts have so clearly demonstrated. If one grants for a moment, however, that there may be 'practical disagreement'---and how can this be denied?---then the tools of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implications' are not only seen to be otiose (one has to appeal beyond them to make them work), but

¹Op.cit., Mind, p. 408.

they lead to conclusions sufficiently paradoxical to warrant asking if the tools are worth using at all.¹---Although Nowell-Smith offers no arguments in the remainder of the book to warrant any qualification of my conclusion I shall briefly consider what he has to say about the 'Persuasive Theory', and about the general value words "good", "right", and "ought". While this plan, I regret, must pass over other interesting topics in this comprehensive book, it does not ignore any problem that could surmount the difficulties we have seen in Nowell-Smith's central thesis.

His account of the 'Persuasive Theory' certainly cannot be said to be a generalization that could appropriately apply to the theory postulated by Stevenson---even though Stevenson makes much of the word "persuasion" and says that "any ethical judgment, is itself a persuasive instrument."² Nowell-Smith introduces his interpretation of the theory in the following passage:

"It is sometimes said that the role of moral sentences is 'persuasive', that they are used to arouse emotions or attitudes or to get people to do things. But although, as we shall see, moral language can be used in this way, the theory confuses the job that moral sentences are used for with the ulterior purposes that we may have in using them. Influencing and persuading are things that we can do with or without words, and their importance for the logic of moral language has been seriously overestimated. A man may use advice, as he may use bribery, cajolery, or the thumb-screw to persuade someone to do something; but what he actually does with this bit of moral language is to advise, not to persuade; just as he may use a hammer for making boxes, but what he actually does with the hammer is not to make a box but to drive in nails."³

The main point of difference between Stevenson and Nowell-Smith is that Stevenson uses the word "persuasive" in a sense almost as broad as must be the stimuli for Nowell-Smith's 'reactions'. But the theory Nowell-Smith is attacking suggests a use of the word "persuasive" at least as

¹See above, pp. 357 & 362-3.

³Ethics, p. 157.

²Stevenson, EL, pp. 139-140.

limited as what appears to be the conventional use of the word---although his supposition that 'persuasion' must always be selfish suggests that he is using the word in a sense even more limited than it may be conventionally used. Socrates and Jesus, for example, were not above using 'persuasion'. While it is perhaps unfortunate that Stevenson adopted the word for the purpose for which he intended, he nevertheless gives ample grounds for interpreting his use in a broad sense. In what is possibly the main passage in which he stipulated in a general way how he intended to use the word he had said that "a method is persuasive to the extent that it supports a judgment by means that go beyond the mediation of articulate beliefs."¹ Thus Nowell-Smith's third method for redirecting attitudes (that is, the exhibiting of a con-attitude without giving any reason) would be termed by Stevenson a 'persuasive' argument. To understand the broad sense in which Stevenson used the word it would be necessary to recall what he considered to be the purposes served by the use of 'emotive' language. Although it is perhaps usual to generalize Stevenson's theory to say that moral language is used, as he had said in one context, "to evoke or directly express attitudes", if we recall the broad purposes served by his use of the word "attitudes" we may begin to understand what he had intended when he said that a moral judgment may be regarded as a "persuasive instrument". He had said, among other things, that "moral judgments are concerned with recommending something for approval or disapproval";² and the words "approval" and "disapproval" may be interpreted, as we have seen, in much the same sense as Nowell-Smith's use of "pro-" and "con-attitudes". Then, speaking of the two types of 'emotive' language, Stevenson had said that "both imperative and ethical sentences

¹Stevenson, EL, p. 144.

²EL, p. 13; see also pp. 21, 22, 27, 33, 38.

are used more for encouraging, altering, or redirecting people's aims and conduct than for simply describing them." It is difficult to think of a word which would not, out of context, misleadingly serve to indicate the way in which Stevenson regarded the relation between one value judgment and the consequent value judgment or decision or action which may have followed. "Persuasive" is obviously misleading when taken out of context as Nowell-Smith has done; but so, too, are the words "stimulus", "motive" and "cause", all of which roughly indicate the purpose for which Stevenson used the word "persuasive". In this broad sense, it should be noted, Nowell-Smith's word "advice" could also be said to be 'persuasive', just as could Hare's word "telling".¹

Nowell-Smith grants that what he terms the 'Persuasive Theory' "enshrines an important truth". That truth, he suggests, is that there must be a 'reason' or 'motive' for doing things, and this applies to 'advising' as well as to any other activity. Sometimes, he suggests, the 'reason' for advising "may be a desire to persuade someone to do something"; but, he continues, "this does not mean, however, that advice can never be disinterested." And in this context Nowell-Smith considers "disinterested" as meaning "unselfish".

"A man who advises another on the choice of a career may be concerned solely for the welfare of the recipient of his advice, and the father who gives death-bed advice to his son can hardly hope to gain by it. The Persuasive Theory, by implying that a man who gives advice must have an ulterior motive, makes an unfortunate and unnecessary concession to the doctrine that all human action is necessarily selfish."²

Stevenson quite rightly protests. "But just who," he asks, "has implied that the motive is 'ulterior'?" It would indeed seem that Nowell-Smith is here tilting with his own strawmen. Certainly the 'stimulus' in a

¹Above, Ch. IV, p. 208.

²Ethics, pp. 157-8.

'persuasive' argument is in some sense 'ulterior', just as are the mountains and films which 'cause' people to have 'reactions' in Nowell-Smith's examples. But in Stevenson's theory, just as in Nowell-Smith's, an 'attitude of approval' (or a 'pro-attitude') must be 'evoked' before a 'choice' is made, and that attitude is solely the agent's. Stevenson clearly indicated that the 'attitudes' of the 'persuader' just as the 'attitudes' of the person persuaded may range from the extremes of 'selfish' to 'altruistic', and, stepping out of his analytic role on several occasions, as I have mentioned, he used strongly persuasive arguments in support of altruism. We may again consider a quotation which makes this point:

"Persuasion is unquestionably a tool of the 'propagandist' and soap-box orator; but it is also the tool of every altruistic reformer that the world has ever known. We must not banish all doctors to rid the world of quacks."¹

In his brief section on "Exhortation" Nowell-Smith possibly comes closest to the problem of 'disagreement in attitude'.² "Exhortation is the use of advising language", he says, "without the contextual implication that the recipient has some pro-attitude towards adopting the suggested course." In such instances, he says, the method of argument might be called "rhetoric", "propaganda", or "suggestion". Once more, however, as Stevenson says, he veers away from the problem. He does not consider the possibility that, if his logical apparatus is sound, disputants in a case of disagreement in attitude might each have their own "logically impeccable reasons" for their conflicting attitudes. He chooses, instead, to attempt another blow at the 'Persuasive Theory'; but this blow is puzzling.

"It is important to notice", he says, "that this (the language of Exhortation) is a secondary use of language, parasitic on

¹Stevenson, EL, p. 164.

²See also, Ethics, p. 194.

on genuine advice; and this fact is fatal to the 'Persuasive' theory of moral language. A man can only learn to accept, and reject advice if, in the majority of cases, accepting the advice does in fact lead to the result he himself desires.... Unless moral words had first been used in a way which connects them with our own interests--whether these be selfish or unselfish--we could never have come to be persuaded or dissuaded by their use and they could not act, as they sometimes do, as levers with which to manipulate the conduct of others."¹

He is certainly not tilting at Hume, Ayer, and especially, Stevenson in this passage. Apart from questioning the phrase "parasitic on genuine advice", Stevenson could quite readily agree with the main 'arguments' in this section.²---In this passage, incidentally, Nowell-Smith clearly reveals his credentials for membership in the family of contemporary non-cognitivists who would be classified by text-book writers as 'subjectivist' or perhaps 'radical subjectivists'.³

Section 6

In his treatment of the general value words "good", "right", and "ought", Nowell-Smith relies considerably on his doctrine of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implications'. Consequently, one of his basic assumptions in his treatment of these words is that there is no logical gap between a D-sentence 'reason' and a 'choice', since they are both 'practical' in such a context. A second basic assumption is that there is a relation of quasi-implication between a D-sentence reason (along with other types of sentences used as 'reasons') and a value-choice. Since I have questioned both assumptions it would be possible to spend considerable time simply applying my earlier criticisms to his analyses of these value words. This now seems a profitless exercise, however, so I shall undertake for the most part simply to summarize the purposes

¹Ethics, p. 158.

²Cf., e.g. EL, pp. 27-8. Also, Ch. IV above, p. 203.

³Cf., above, p. 311.

which he considers are served by the uses of these words. It is here, I believe, that Nowell-Smith makes his most valuable contribution to the analyses of the language of values---even though this is a secondary consideration as compared with the attempt to resolve the problem of the Humean gap. Because of his assumptions, the problem of the Humean gap again emerges in his analysis of these words, as I shall indicate on the occasions when I deviate from my general plan to summarize his analysis.

In the first section of the chapter entitled "Good" he considers the word in what he assumes are its fundamental uses, that is in the contexts of 'choice' and of 'advice'. The 'logical behaviour' of the words, he asserts, is the same in both contexts, thus I shall consider only the context of 'choice'. He assumes of course that the question "What shall I do" is the fundamental practical question, and that the answer is a sentence expressing a 'preference'. (Nowell-Smith here appears to rely on the quasi-logical link which he assumes between 'preferences', 'decisions', and 'choice'---but this, as I have argued, is a questionable assumption).¹ In this section he takes as his task the analysis of such expressions as "Because it is a good one" and "Because it is the best" when they are offered as explanations or reasons for choosing and advising. The peculiarities of the 'logical behaviour' of "good" and "best", he contends, have to do with the fact that they are among the most general and most flexible of 'practical' words. When we consider his classification of sentences that may be used as 'explanations' or 'reasons' for choosing and advising, we see the following categories: (1) D-sentences (such as "Because it has more leg-room", when said of a choice of a car) which are explicit about the empirical properties of the thing chosen,

¹Above, pp. 353.

and which 'contextually imply' an A-property "without specifying what it is"; (2) A-sentences (such as "Because it is more comfortable") which are not as descriptively specific as D-sentences. The A-word "comfortable" is expressed as a 'reaction' to A-properties, but these properties are not named, but merely 'contextually implied'. Both D- and A-sentences when offered as explanations for choosing and advising are said to 'contextually imply' a pro-attitude towards the relevant A-property; (3) G-sentences, which would indicate that the car 'ought' to be chosen, are even less specific about the 'reasons'. (As I have argued earlier, however, it is impossible to differentiate between A- and G-words either in logic or practice, and this is again seen in the first section on "good". He has given as an example of an A-word the statement "Because it is more comfortable"; but the word "comfort" is included in his list of pro-attitude words, and thus one would suppose that the statement "Because it is more comfortable" would, like a G-sentence, 'express' a pro-attitude just as much as it would 'contextually imply' it). As Stevenson would say, such words as Nowell-Smith would include among his G-words are 'descriptively poor'. But a G-sentence, according to Nowell-Smith, would show "more plainly than an A-sentence that advice was being given." (4) Finally, we have the category of the most general of practical words, "good", "best", "right", and "ought". As compared with a less general G-sentence, he says, the expression "Because it is the best" shows "more plainly that I was choosing but says even less about the reasons. In fact it says nothing about them at all; it only implies that I have reasons."¹ There is a similarity between what Nowell-Smith says about these words and what Stevenson says about 'first-pattern' words.

¹Ethics, p. 167.

Both philosophers are in agreement that the words, when considered out of contexts, are descriptively vague or unspecific, but that they express the attitudes of the speaker. (It is to be wondered, by the way, if Nowell-Smith, with his emphasis on contexts, is justified in saying that the word "best" says nothing about the reasons for its use, for, as he allows, it is "the Janus-word par excellence", and one would assume that in some contexts its 'descriptive meaning' is not only implied but is obvious. Stevenson had also said, as we have seen, that the word "good" is extremely "flexible", but far from suggesting that it always is descriptively vague, he had said that "it may be used to mean such qualities as reliable, charitable, honest, and so on, and may even have a specific reference as that to going faithfully to church on Sundays".)¹ While there are similarities in their analyses of "good" there is of course a significant difference, for Stevenson would say that the statement "Because it is the best" could never be a 'reason' as such, since it is not a 'belief'-statement. It would have to be considered among 'non-rational' methods for reinforcing, or altering, or opposing attitudes. Nowell-Smith, on the other hand, allows that it is a 'reason', although not the best of 'reasons'. "The trouble", he says, "is that the reason is too good." By that he means, in part, that the expression does not 'say anything' about the reasons for its use. That is to say, it is descriptively unspecific. Its value, he suggests, is that it "shows that my choice was no passing whim, that it was considered more or less carefully, that the object had certain unspecified 'good-making' properties, and that my choice was not a peculiar one."² Thus he says that on hearing the reason "Because it is the best" the response "I know you thought it

¹Stevenson, EL, p. 35.

²Ethics, p. 161.

the best car; but why did you choose it?" is 'logically odd'. Now as we have seen, he assumes that the question "What shall I do?" is the fundamental practical question; and, as I have suggested, his assumption that "practical discourse...consists in answers to practical questions" appears to have led to his neglect of 'practical disagreement'. This is again apparent in his analysis of "good" in the contexts of choice and advice. If we were to accept his use of the tools of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implications', we might well allow that it is 'logically odd' to say "I know you thought it the best car; but why did you choose it"?; but there would appear to be nothing 'logically odd', however, about questioning the 'reason' itself, rather than the choice that followed from the 'reason'. In other words, one might say "I know you thought it the best car, but I disagree with you." Since it is possible that in such cases of disagreement, as Stevenson maintains,¹ one person could block another person's "effective decision" (or choice), the disputants would be left, as it were, with two conflicting value judgments---and these value judgments are judgments qua appraisals or verdicts, and not qua decisions and choices. I shall return to this point shortly, but in the meantime I would point out that when such a disagreement occurs the practical question facing the disputants is not "How do I explain or give reasons for my choice?", since the 'choice', in the sense of doing something, has not been accomplished. The question is rather "How do I support my appraisal or verdict or value judgment of the situation?" The problem of resolving evaluative disagreement expressed in terms of conflicting value appraisals or judgments appears to be no less fundamental than the problem of answering the question "What shall I do?".

¹Stevenson, op.cit., Mind, p. 408.

More faithful than most contemporary moral philosophers to the doctrine that a word may have a variety of uses, Nowell-Smith now considers other uses of the word "good". He discusses these uses, he says, "in the order in which they seem to diverge more and more from the fundamental use, which is to express or explain a preference."¹ (When he uses the word "preference", we recall, he intends that it be considered in the sense in which it means "thinking that a course of action is better than another", and, further, that there is a quasi-analytic relation between 'preference' and 'decision', and between 'decision' and 'choice'. As I have argued, however,² he does not convincingly establish that quasi-analytic relation, and there is thus a logical gap between a 'preference', which is expressed by means of a value sentence, and a decision, which may be expressed by means of the sentence "I shall do this"). Now in saying that there are other uses of the word "good", he does not say that the uses are independent of a 'preference', since at the end of the chapter he writes the following sentence:

"The various ways in which 'good' is used are unintelligible unless they are directly or indirectly connected with choice; and I shall try to show later that the same applies to 'ought'."³

His analysis of the various uses of "good" thus has a dual purpose: first, to indicate that there are other uses which are logically distinguishable from its use in sentences expressing 'preferences', and thus 'choices'; and secondly, to argue for his thesis that the use of "good" in sentences expressing 'preferences' and 'choices' is 'the fundamental use'.

The three other main 'practical' categories of usage of "good" are, (a) "Praising and Applauding", (b) "Commending", in the sense in which it means to advise a person to choose the thing commended, and

¹Ethics, p. 163.
³Ethics, p. 182.

²Above, p. 353-4.

(c) "Verdicts and Appraisals". While he says that the (a) and (b) categories are closer to 'choosing' in that they are performances, the (c) category of "Verdicts and Appraisals" comprises sentences which cannot be termed performances or decisions to do something, but are rather "judgments". It is in this category that he places moral judgments (I shall return to this shortly). He then proceeds to give two "special cases of the appraising use." First, there is (d) "Efficiency".

"When 'good' is predicated of any object (Natural or artificial, animate or inanimate) that is used for a purpose, it implies the presence in a relatively high degree of those properties that the object must have to do its job."

The second special case of the 'appraising' use is in the cases of (e) "Skill".

"When we call a man a good lawyer, scholar, cricketer, or liar, the use is similar to the 'efficiency' use except for the fact that, since these are men, the purpose concerned is their purpose, not the purpose they are used for."

In all of these practical uses, he says, there is more than simply an empirical recognition that something measures up to criteria or conforms to certain standards, for, also, a pro-attitude is 'implied'. Finally there is (f) "the descriptive use", in which a man who uses the word "good" may not be "choosing, advising, defending a choice or piece of advice, or appraising, but referring to an object which he or others would call good if they were doing one of these."¹

This classification of other uses of the word "good" is of interest for several reasons when it is compared with the views expressed in earlier writings in moral philosophy. It implies, for example, the rejection of any 'one-track' analysis such as Hare's which asserts that the primary and only 'function' of value judgments is that of 'commending' or guiding

¹Ethics, p. 166.

choices, although it recognizes Hare's thesis as part of a broader thesis. Similarly, it recognizes that Urmson's views on 'grading' are simply part of a broader thesis. Nor would Nowell-Smith reject the '"good" as instrumental' theory (as Hare does) but would incorporate that 'one-track' theory, along with Hare's, Urmson's, and others, in his more general thesis. But even more important than these comparisons, and more controversial, is that Nowell-Smith asserts in effect that the concern of most modern philosophers for moral judgments qua appraisals or verdicts has been a limited concern. The use of "good" in moral judgments qua appraisals, that is, is simply one of a variety of uses, and is not even the most fundamental. Nowell-Smith grants that his view is not easily established when, in the section "Preference and Appraisal", he writes the following passage:

"But it is the connexions between the performatory uses and the verdict-giving, judging, or appraising use when the qualities on which the verdict is based are thought to be 'admirable in themselves' that are the most important and the most difficult".¹

In his argument he substitutes the word "preferable" for "admirable", "since admiration is itself a performance akin to praising and 'admirable' is therefore too narrow in scope to cover all appraisals other than those of efficiency and skill." His argument rests on the view that although the "performatory uses" of the word "good" (that is, in choosing, advising, praising and applauding, and commending) 'contextually imply' appraisal, "it is not so clear that the converse is true." What this amounts to saying is that whereas an act of 'preference' is involved in all of the performatory uses, and in such acts a pro-attitude is implied and expressed, in some cases of appraising, however, (such as in the

¹Ethics, p. 170.

'grading' of candidates, or wine) it is possible that the 'appraiser' is simply grading in an empirical way by reference to established criteria. No 'preference' and thus no pro-attitude is implied, he suggests, in such non-practical cases of appraising.

This argument and other arguments in the chapter would establish Nowell-Smith's thesis that the use of "good" in moral judgments qua appraisals is logically less fundamental than its use in sentences expressing choices and decisions, only if we grant several assumptions which I am not prepared to grant. The most important of these for the present argument is his supposition that the act of preference is linked in a quasi-analytic way to decision and thus to choice, and therefore may be said to be a 'performance' in the same sense as they are said to be performances. As I have argued, however,¹ he does not convincingly establish that quasi-analytic relationship, and so long as he is prepared to say that a 'preference' is logically distinguishable from a 'decision', then we must assume that there is a 'gap' between them. And since sentences expressing preferences are those which assert that one course of action is better than another, they would appear to be indistinguishable from sentences which are normally said to be value judgments qua appraisals (such as, "I consider that to be a better car"). A second assumption is that it is possible to employ the tool of 'logical oddness' in assessing whether a preference, or a decision, or a choice, is 'appropriate' without making a value judgment (or value-appraisal). But, as I have indicated, the tool cannot be used in practical situations without implicitly or explicitly making a value judgment²---and even then it leads to serious paradoxes. A third reason for questioning the view that

¹Above, pp. 351 ff.

²Above, pp. 355-6.

sentences expressing decisions and choices qua performances are logically more fundamental than value judgments is related to his neglect of disagreement in attitudes. As Stevenson has said, Nowell-Smith's examples "give the impression that evaluative problems are readily brought to a reasoned solution."¹ Stevenson also mentioned, as we have seen, that it is possible to consider examples in which one person could block another person's "effective decision" or choice, and this is tantamount to saying that one person could, by means of a value judgment, block another person's 'performance'. Thus, as I have suggested,² a question which appears to be no less fundamental than Nowell-Smith's question "What shall I do?" is the question "How do I support my appraisal or verdict or value judgment of the situation?" I would now add, "How do I support my preference for something?" This is of course another way of expressing one of the guiding questions in Stevenson's book.

Towards the end of the chapter Nowell-Smith argues that the "practical uses" of the word "good" are "logically prior to the appraising use",³ but "appraising" in this context could apply only to his non-practical appraisals,⁴ in which a person "may be simply applying the criteria that he and others customarily use for these purposes."⁵ This argument does not then support the view that the use of the word "good" in contexts of 'choice' and 'advice' is always more fundamental than its use in situations of 'practical appraisal', since, as I have shown, 'practical appraisal' is necessarily involved in the 'preference' which precedes, and is not logically related to, 'decisions' and 'choices' and 'pieces of advice'. His argument shows only that it has been possible,

¹Stevenson, Mind, p. 408.

³Ethics, p. 180.

⁵Ibid., p. 177.

²Above, p. 385.

⁴Ibid., p. 176.

in some manner, to establish criteria which may be used empirically, and that it is thus possible to use words like "fair", "good", "better", and "best" in what Hare has termed 'an inverted commas sense'. Thus, in view of the preceding arguments, and especially in view of my argument that 'preferences' cannot be said to be related in any logical way to 'decisions', nor 'decisions' to 'choices', I cannot accept Nowell-Smith's view that moral judgments are logically less fundamental than statements expressing decisions and choices (expressed in the form "I shall do this"). I would say, on the contrary, that if we use his new 'logical apparatus' we would be committed to the view that value-appraisals or value judgments are in fact logically prior to decisions and choices. I cannot insist on this conclusion, however, since I cannot accept his 'logical apparatus' and I can see no logical relation whatever between value judgments and statements of the form "I shall do this". Given the choice in this context of either the new 'logical apparatus' to remove the problem of 'Hume's gap', or the acknowledgment of the gap and, according to Nowell-Smith, "unfathomable mystery", I must then choose the latter.

The difficulties which have emerged in this brief consideration of "good" cannot be resolved by anything that Nowell-Smith says in his analysis of "right" and "ought". The reason for saying this is simply that he considers that "good" is logically more fundamental than "right" and "ought"; and any weakness in the analysis of "good" will remain as an underlying weakness in the analysis of "right" and "ought". Whereas Stevenson had said in effect that the 'logical behaviour' of "right" and "ought" is the same as that of "good"¹ (the only difference being that we conventionally use "right" and "ought" to refer to "actions, while we

¹Stevenson, EL, pp. 97-102.

tend to use "good" to refer to "persons or things"), Nowell-Smith maintains that there is an important difference between them. The main difference, he contends, is that "right" and "ought" are, as it were, one step removed from 'pro-attitudes'. While "good" and "best" not only 'contextually imply' but also 'overtly express' pro-attitudes, "right" and "ought" only 'contextually imply' such attitudes. The main reason for making this distinction (if I understand his point correctly) is that we cannot judge an action without considering "the purpose of the person concerned", and a purpose is understood in terms of a 'decision' or a 'choice'. To reinforce his point that "good" is more closely linked with 'pro-attitudes' than are "ought" and "right", he writes (in a later chapter) the following passage:

"We could imagine a world in which people used such words as good, desire, aim, purpose, choose, happiness, and enjoy, but in which they had no conception whatever of duty, obligation, right, and ought....

We could also imagine a world in which people used pro-words and also used the words 'right' and 'ought' in a purely hypothetical way; for they might discover that they could only achieve their ends by adopting certain courses which they would call 'the right course' or 'the course we ought to adopt'. But it is impossible to imagine a world in which people used the words obligation, duty, right, and ought but did not use any pro-words at all."¹

Thus, to generalize his analysis perhaps too extremely, from a consideration of the question "What ought I to do?" we are taken back to the question "What shall I do?" as "the fundamental question in ethics."² While I shall not quarrel with his postulation of a "modified teleological" theory, I shall of course quarrel with his basic question---at least in the form in which he has asked it, and as if, in answering it, the conclusion "I shall do this" is linked in a quasi-analytic way to

¹Ethics, p. 224.

²Ethics, pp. 267-8.

the question. As I have indicated, a question which may be said to be at least as fundamental is the question "How do I support my appraisal or verdict or value judgment?" But even to recognize this question is to maintain that Nowell-Smith's 'logical apparatus' will not necessarily provide an answer to the question "What shall I do?", however 'logically impeccable' (in Nowell-Smith's terms) my own 'preference' may seem to be. I must still face the possibility of a further demand for 'reasons' for my 'preference' or 'value judgment'; and at this point we may again ask Stevenson's fundamental theme-setting question, "What is the nature of ethical agreement and disagreement?"¹

Nowell-Smith's principal aim, we recall, was to argue that the problem posed by Hume's challenge against arguments from 'is' to 'ought' is, in effect, a pseudo-problem when considered in terms of providing reasons for value judgments. Thus I had taken as my main question for the assessment of his theory the question "Does Nowell-Smith convincingly resolve the problem posed by Hume?" To accomplish his aim he had to eliminate not simply one 'gap', but two; that is, he had to show, first, that factual or D-sentences when used as 'reasons' could be said to be 'practical' in the same sense as were sentences expressing preferences, decisions, choices, and value judgments. This does not eliminate the more important gap, however, between 'reasons' and preferences, decisions, choices, and value judgments. Hume might at this point challenge an argument from a D-sentence to, for example, a G-conclusion. In his attempt to eliminate this gap, Nowell-Smith offered his new 'logical apparatus' with its special tools, 'logical oddness' and 'contextual

¹Stevenson, EL, p. 2.

implications'. But the neglect of disagreement in attitude allowed him to overlook the shortcomings of the 'apparatus' and the paradoxes to which its use would lead. My conclusion must be that he, like Hare, has not resolved Hume's problem.

In the Introduction I have indicated that throughout my examination of the work of the five philosophers there would be two underlying themes. The more fundamental of the two is the challenge posed by Hume when he maintained that there is no logical relationship between 'is'-type and 'ought'-type propositions. Following Nowell-Smith I have referred to this as the problem of 'Hume's gap'. The secondary theme is concerned with qualifications and modifications to the Humean brand of non-cognitivism resulting from the theories of 'meaning' held by each of the four contemporary philosophers. These two themes are intimately related, since either the acceptance of 'Hume's gap', or any attempt either to bridge it or to eliminate it altogether is dependent to a considerable extent on the theory of 'meaning' one holds or presupposes. The problem posed by Hume would have been resolved, for example, if Kant, aroused from his 'dogmatic slumbers' by this very problem, had been successful in arguing for the possibility of 'synthetic a priori propositions'. That is to say, that he had been able to postulate a theory of meaning which has attributes like the Humean view of meaning in that it is a theory which is not subject to the same kind of sceptical doubts as the Humean view, but also a theory which is not subject to the same kind of sceptical doubts as the Humean view. Kant's theory of meaning, however, failed to do this and was consequently rejected by modern philosophers. Nor had

¹Kant, *Groundwork*, tr. Paton, p. 126.

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction I have indicated that throughout my examination of the works of the five philosophers there would be two underlying themes. The more fundamental of the two is the challenge posed by Hume when he maintained that there is no logical relationship between 'is'-type and 'ought'-type propositions. Following Nowell-Smith I have referred to this as the problem of 'Hume's gap'. The secondary theme is concerned with qualifications and modifications to the Humean brand of non-cognitivism resulting from the theories of 'meaning' held by each of the four contemporary philosophers. These two themes are intimately related, since either the acceptance of 'Hume's gap', or any attempt either to bridge it or to eliminate it altogether is dependent to a considerable extent on the theory of 'meaning' one holds or presupposes. The problem posed by Hume would have been resolved, for example, if Kant, aroused from his 'dogmatic slumbers' by this very problem, had been successful in arguing for the possibility of 'synthetic a priori propositions'. That is to say, Kant had hoped in effect to postulate a theory of meaning which would encompass not only analytic and empirical propositions but also a kind of proposition which would permit us to say that value judgments are similarly 'cognitive'. Kant's argument did not conclusively resolve the problem, however, neither to his own complete satisfaction,¹ nor to the satisfaction of most modern philosophers. Nor had

¹Kant, Groundwork, tr. Paton, p. 129.

any other modern philosopher resolved Hume's problem to the satisfaction of most others; and the problem had remained to confront contemporary moral philosophers. Considering these two themes I shall now summarize what I have had to say about each of our four contemporaries. In this summary I shall not consider the anti-cognitivist arguments we have reviewed. I accept that in these arguments our non-cognitivists have established a convincingly 'persuasive' case against traditional cognitivist theories of moral philosophy, in particular the theories of 'naturalists' and 'intuitionists'.

Both in the early and later expressions of his emotivist theory Ayer accepts 'Hume's gap'. There can be no logical bridge, he maintains, between 'factual' statements and value judgments. Either in the making of a value judgment based upon a consideration of 'facts' or in the attempt to 'support' a value judgment by appealing to 'facts', the relationship between the different types of statements is psychological and not logical. The 'autonomy of morals' is strictly maintained (too strictly in fact). In both versions of his theory his views about the nature of value judgments and of factual statements are obviously influenced by two epistemological assumptions¹ which are similar to those held by Hume. These assumptions are, first, that some form of the 'verificationist' theory is the one-and-only theory of 'meaning', and, secondly, the related assumption that the theory of 'meaning' is a unum nomen, unum nominatum theory. Ayer appears to be unwilling to accept doctrines usually associated with the later Wittgenstein that 'the meaning of a word is in its use' and that a single word may have more than one meaning at one and

¹Above, Ch. II, p. 94.

the same time. Thus the relevant value-word in a value judgment cannot be said to have any 'descriptive meaning'; and, secondly, since value judgments cannot pass any 'verification' test they must be regarded, so to speak, as second-class citizens of language. When Hume reversed the roles of 'reason' and the 'passions', however, it seems clear that he by no means under-valued the 'passions' (or under-valued values). If Kemp Smith's thesis is sound Hume had in fact approached his epistemology from the prior assumption of the predominance of 'values'. Ayer, on the other hand, gives much greater emphasis to 'reason', and his approach is definitely from the assumption of the predominance of 'cognitive' statements. Thus he has difficulty in finding a place for value judgments in his general philosophical theory. In the early version of his theory they are regarded as "mere pseudo-concepts" or as having "no factual meaning", and although he later modifies his manner of expressing his theory to allow that value judgments may be said to have 'meaning', this allowance is rather a bow to conventions of language than a significant modification of his theory. The main modification of his theory is in his contention that value judgments express and evoke 'attitudes', with the word "attitudes" used in a dispositional sense; whereas in his early theory, in saying that value judgments express and evoke 'feelings', he tended to use "feelings" in the 'occurrence' or 'itches and aches' sense. Thus his later version avoids the difficulty apparent in the objection that he could not adequately account for the fact that we may judge that the action of Brutus was morally wrong even though we may have no 'feelings' about his action. But this modification does not essentially alter his emotivist analysis of ethical judgments. For Ayer there is no question of either bridging (by logic) or eliminating 'Hume's gap'.

For Stevenson, the 'sides' of 'Hume's gap', so to speak, are not so completely separable as Ayer has made them out to be. Indeed the analogy of the 'gap' becomes more difficult to apply. Although in insisting on the distinction between 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' he is insisting on the 'autonomy of morals', he nevertheless does not maintain (as Ayer does) that a statement used to express a value judgment is simply evaluative. Nor does he maintain that a statement used to express a 'belief' must be simply 'descriptive'. That is to say, a statement may have both 'emotive meaning' and 'descriptive meaning'; and in saying this he is not using the word "meaning" in a different generic sense in each case. It is rather that each type of 'meaning' is a co-ordinate species. With Stevenson, unlike Ayer, sentences used for expressing value judgments have as much right to be termed "meaningful" as do sentences expressing 'beliefs'. He is able to say this since he believes that the verification principle, as useful as it is for some purposes, is not appropriate for testing value judgments. To assume that it is appropriate would be to make the mistake of emphasizing 'beliefs' to the neglect of 'attitudes', and thus to hold 'cognitivist' assumptions. To maintain that value-sentences may be 'meaningfully' on a par with sentences expressing 'beliefs' Stevenson postulates his 'psychological or pragmatic theory of meaning'; and this theory is a general theory, within which 'emotive meaning' and 'descriptive meaning' are co-ordinate species.

He differs from Ayer in another significant respect, however, for he asserts that it is possible to say of a statement, as of an individual word within it, that it has both 'descriptive' and 'emotive' meaning. He employs, that is, the doctrines that a word may have a variety of uses, and that it may serve more than one purpose at one and the same time. Now if a sentence used for the purpose of expressing a value judgment may be

said to have 'descriptive' meaning, as well as 'emotive' meaning, then it has something in common with a sentence used primarily to express a 'belief'. Thus it is possible to establish a partial logical link between 'descriptive' or 'factual' statements and value judgments. A 'descriptive' statement may be used, for example, to point up a formal inconsistency between the 'descriptive' meanings of two value judgments made by the same person. "In general," he writes, "ethical statements, like all others that have at least some descriptive meaning, are amenable to the usual applications of formal logic."¹ 'Hume's gap', if considered only in terms of the sentences which express 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' (rather than in terms of the 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' themselves) is thus seen to be able to be partially bridged; but, it is to be emphasized, this 'bridge' is only between the 'descriptive' element of the factual statement and the 'descriptive' element of the value statement. There is no such logical 'bridge' between any 'element' of the factual statement and the 'evaluative' or 'emotive' element of the value statement. Thus any 'factual' statement used to point up the formal inconsistencies of either two or more value statements, or a value statement and a factual statement made by any person, will not logically entail that the person who makes the statements must make them consistent. Similarly, any 'factual' statement used as a 'supporting reason' for a value statement will not necessarily lead another person to agree with that value statement. Thus, despite his establishing a partial link between descriptive statements and value statements, Stevenson would insist that there is a fundamental gap between them which cannot be bridged by logic.

Among other ways in which Stevenson follows Hume, possibly the

¹EL, p. 116; cf., above, Ch. III, p. 163.

most significant is that not only does he insist upon the 'autonomy of morals', but he emphasizes the 'emotive' or 'dynamic' use of value judgments as being the primary use. He is an 'emotivist', and among contemporary emotivists he appears to be the most thorough and the most cautious. When we use value judgments, he insists, our primary purpose is, in an extremely broad sense, 'emotive'. This word, with its association with 'feelings' and 'passions' in the 'occurrence' sense, is perhaps unfortunate, and critics of 'emotivism' tend to think of the word in the narrow sense. In Stevenson's use, however, it could be said to encompass all of the range of purposes between expressing and evoking 'feelings' to expressing and evoking 'attitudes'. Now Stevenson obviously emphasizes 'attitudes' in his analysis of ethical disagreement (and agreement), and in this sense he refers to the expressing of 'attitudes' in a manner that could easily be said to include commanding, commending, prescribing, grading, praising, guiding conduct and choices, advising, and other such uses stressed by other contemporaries as being the primary uses of value judgments. It is not enough, then, for a philosopher to dissociate himself from 'emotivism' by attacking the most primitive expression of it. To avoid Stevenson's theory it would be necessary to indicate that his analysis inadequately 'characterizes' the relationship between 'factual' statements and value judgments, for it is in his analysis of that relationship that he reveals what is distinctive about his brand of emotivism. And for a non-cognitivist to indicate that Stevenson's analysis is unconvincing it would be necessary not only to show in what way that analysis is inadequate but also to postulate a theory which in some way offers a more convincing treatment of 'Hume's gap'.

Hare reacts against the 'emotivist' views that the fundamental

relation between a factual statement and a value judgment, and the fundamental relation between a value judgment and a decision to do something, is 'causal'. All genuinely evaluative moral reasoning, he contends, is either explicitly or implicitly syllogistic in form; and moral judgments, like factual statements, are governed by logical rules. By means of his analysis he claims to have revealed a practical syllogism which we use or assume in our moral reasoning; and in his treatment of this syllogism he makes use of Wittgenstein's doctrine that words and statements may have more than one use (or 'meaning') at one and the same time. Treating the 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' elements of premisses and conclusions separately (using traditional rules of inference for the 'descriptive' or 'phrastic' elements, and stipulating a new logical rule for the quasi-imperative or 'neustic' elements) he purports to show how a genuine 'piece' of moral reasoning can proceed from 'factual' premisses to an evaluative conclusion. But his argument fails. It fails first in its negative anti-emotivist phase in which he seeks to distinguish between 'telling' and 'persuading'. Moral judgments and imperatives are, in one sense, like 'statements', he asserts, and in that sense they 'tell' a person something without 'influencing' him. The strength of his argument rests on 'persuasive' illustrations, however, for he uses the word "persuasion" in a manner in which we often use the word "propaganda", rather than in the broad 'causal' sense in which Stevenson uses the word. In that broad sense of "persuasion", what Hare refers to as a "statement" may often be said to be "persuasive". It is not difficult to think of 'statements' (or 'descriptive indicatives', as I have termed them) which appear to 'stimulate' or 'motivate' actions. His argument also fails in the positive phase, in which he presents his principal thesis that all

genuinely evaluative moral reasoning is either explicitly or implicitly syllogistic in form. By means of his practical syllogism he would bridge 'Hume's gap', and in place of a type of 'emotivism' he would postulate a type of non-causal 'conativism'. But his argument would lead to the consequence of reducing value judgments to imperatives, a consequence which not only contradicts his intention, but also re-introduces into the tradition of non-cognitivism the problem of explaining moral judgments about men and actions of the past. Are we not doing something other than issuing an 'imperative' when we praise Socrates? Of even greater significance is that if the practical syllogism is truly fundamental to our moral reasoning, then the most that can be said for it is that it is trivial, with its major premiss no more general than the 'maxim' of the particular action or judgment which is said to be its 'conclusion'. There is nothing in Hare's argument, I suggest, that would warrant our concluding either that he has convincingly dissociated himself from 'emotivism' or that his treatment of 'Hume's gap' is to be preferred over Stevenson's analysis.

Nowell-Smith does not seek to bridge 'Hume's gap'; he seeks rather to eliminate it. In trying to support his thesis he makes considerable use of the doctrines of meaning of the later-Wittgenstein: that words, like tools, may have a variety of uses, and, more importantly, that unless we are otherwise cautioned we may assume the 'Janus-principle' that any word has more than one use at any one time. Thus we need not assume that any 'is'-type statement which is used in moral reasoning is simply 'descriptive'. If such a statement is used either as a basis upon which we make a value judgment, or as a 'reason' for a value judgment we have made, then that statement is appropriately termed 'practical'. It is

thus of the same general logical type as the value judgment itself; and to say this, he suggests, is to eliminate 'Hume's gap'. As I have argued, however, there is a more fundamental gap implicit in Hume's challenge. There is a gap, that is, between sentences with 'descriptive-force' and sentences with 'gerundive-' or 'evaluative-force'. Like Hare, Nowell-Smith is unwilling to accept the 'emotivist' solution that the basic relation between such sentences is in some sense 'causal' or 'psychological', although (unlike Hare) he allows that there are 'causal' relations between 'stimuli' (such as seeing mountains and cars) and 'reactions' to such 'stimuli'. He wishes to maintain, nevertheless, that the relation between statements used with 'descriptive-force' and those with 'gerundive-force' is quasi-logical and not causal. Thus he presents his 'new logical apparatus' in which the tools of 'logical oddness' and 'contextual implication' are most important. As I have argued, however, these tools cannot be used in moral argument unless one makes prior moral judgments in using them. The tools serve no purpose therefore that could not be served simply by the value judgments used in their employment. The tools are, so to speak, post hoc to the judgments used in applying them. Furthermore, by his neglect of ethical disagreement Nowell-Smith fails to see the paradox that, with his 'logical apparatus', two people could each have 'logically impeccable' reasons for expressing 'logically at odds' value judgments. His analysis does not then provide a satisfactory method for the bridging of the more fundamental gap implicit in Hume's challenge. Neither in the use of his 'new logical apparatus', nor in his oblique and unconvincing arguments against a 'Persuasive Theory' (not Stevenson's) does Nowell-Smith offer a solution to Hume's challenge which is to be preferred over Stevenson's 'emotivist' and Humean answer. 'Hume's gap' remains to be bridged by logic.

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